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THE IDEOLOGY OF THE CHARKHA

CRCT 132.
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, EXTENSION TRAINING CENTRE
14 FEB 1957
T. KALLUPATTI
KV126
KV193

A Collection of Some of Gandhiji's Speeches and Writings about Khadi

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Shrikrishnadas Jaju

First Edition 2000 Copies—March 1951

Rupee One

Annas 14

Published by
THE A. I. S. A. KHADDAR MALAR AND
SARVODAYA PRACHURALAYAM, TIRUPUR
FOR THE
ALL INDIA SPINNERS' ASSOCIATION, SEVAGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The spinning wheel in India today is Gandhiji's unique and original creation. It will therefore be most appropriate to seek a clear exposition of the ideas underlying the charkha through his own words. He wrote a number of articles from time to time during the various phases of the khadi movement. These atricles and reports of his lectures and discussions on the subject were originally published in his two English weeklies, *Young India* and *Harijan*. The book *Economics of Khadi* contains most of these.

The present booklet is a compilation of extracts mainly from the above classified under different subject-heads. All the important material relating to the various aspects of khadi has been here collected and classified. This matter was originally published in Hindi under the title *Charkhe ki Tatvik Mimamsa*. Special care has been taken to arrange this in a chronological order, as far as possible, to enable the reader to get a clear insight into the development of the ideas on charkha and its implications during the various stages of its progress.

Besides Gandhiji's articles and speeches in English, there are his other articles and speeches which were made originally in Hindi. These have been translated into English for the purpose of this book.* In spite of all the care, I am afraid, some inaccuracies might have crept in. The reader will, of

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* These can be known by the asteric on the date bracket at the end of each.

course, miss the sweetness and vigour of Gandhiji's characteristic English in the portions which had to be translated from Hindi.

Since many of the articles had appeared and speeches had been made having regard to circumstances then existing and in particular contexts, part of this collection may not appear to be appropriate under the present situation. Moreover this is merely a compilation of his writings and talks at various times and therefore is not a comprehensive treatise on the subject.

Though we have tried to avoid repetitions, they have become unavoidable in certain places because of the very nature of this compilation. For the sake of brevity, certain portions of the extracts which had special reference to the then existing contexts, had to be omitted retaining only the general arguments which serve the purpose of this study. To facilitate easy understanding I have tried to assign to each extract an appropriate sub-head approximating as far as possible to the central theme.

I hope that, in spite of the limitations mentioned above, this book will stimulate the interest of the reader to a deeper study of this important subject.

My thanks are due to the Navajivan Trust, Ahmadabad for their kind permission for taking extracts from their publications.

Wardha
16–3–'51.

SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

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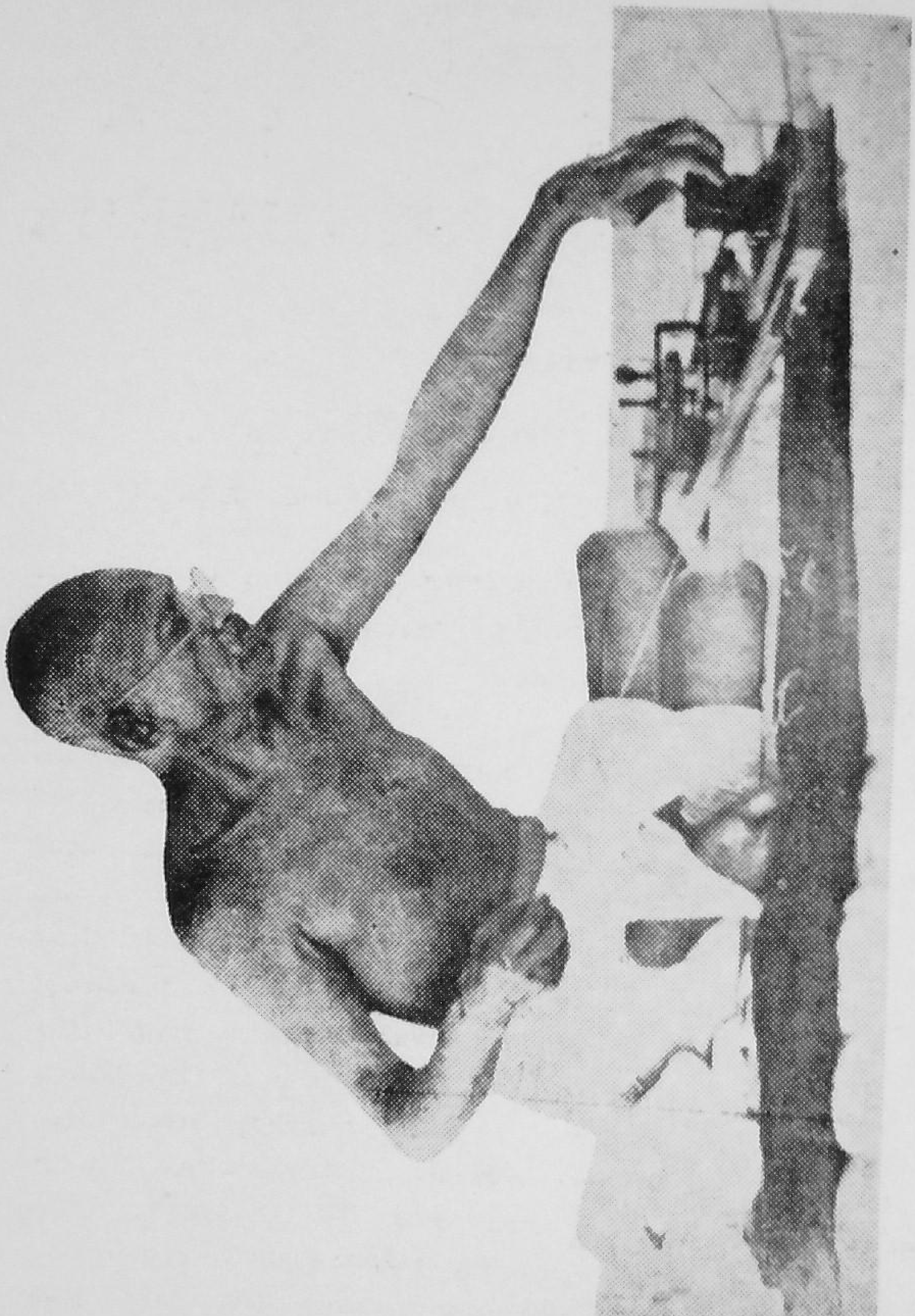

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE CHARKHA

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING

GENESIS OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

On being asked by a friend on 20-9-1928 as to when and how exactly he re-discovered the charkha, Gandhiji replied :—

"It was in London in 1908 that I discovered the wheel. I had gone there leading a deputation from South Africa. It was then that I came in close touch with many earnest Indians—students and others. We had many long conversations about the condition of India, and I saw as in a flash that without the spinning wheel there was no Swaraj. I knew at once that everyone had to spin. But I did not then know the distinction between the loom and the wheel, and in *Hind Swaraj* used the word loom to mean the wheel. This is what I have said in the concluding chapter of the booklet :

"We will get nothing by asking. We shall have to take what we want, and we need the requisite strength for the effort and that strength will be available to him only who

* * * *

2. "If a lawyer, will give up his profession and take up a hand-loom (spinning wheel);

* * * *

8. "Although a doctor, will take up a hand-loom (spinning wheel);

10. "If a wealthy man will devote his money to establishing hand-looms (spinning wheels), and encourage others to use hand-made goods by wearing them himself."

The book *Hind Swaraj* written by Gandhiji in 1908 is well known. In that book we find the quintessence of all his teachings which he subsequently placed before the nation in greater detail. In Chapter XIX of that book entitled, *Machinery* we find the root of the spinning wheel. The following are a few illustrative sentences :—

* "When I read Mr. Dutt's *Economic History of India* I wept; and as I think of it, again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin. The workers in the mills of Bombay have become utter slaves. Those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockfeller would be better than the

* Translated from the original in Gujarati.

American Rockfeller. We need not, therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill industry. We do not despise the mill-owners. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills but we may implore them not to increase their number. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people of their accord can cease to use machine-made goods. It is not possible that all people will begin to do all these things simultaneously. We must first make a resolve and then work will begin according to it. In the beginning one will do this, then ten, thereafter hundred and so the number will increase. What the leaders do, the people will follow. We need not wait until we carry others with us. We should begin to actually do a thing as soon as we feel it should be done."

MAN AND MACHINE

In 1924 this subject was made clearer in answer to some questions.

Question :—Are you against all machinery?

Answer :—How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call 'labour-saving' machinery. Men go on saving labour, till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the

concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. * * * * The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exception. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented.

Ques. :—In that case, there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.

Ans. :—Certainly. I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized or state-controlled. The saving of the labour of the individual should be the object and honest humanitarian considerations and not greed, the motive. I would welcome any day, a machine to straighten crooked spindles.

Ques. :—If the Singer Sewing Machine and the machine for straightening crooked spindles are to be accepted as exceptions where will this claim of exceptions end ?

Ans. :—Where the machine instead of helping will begin to encroach upon man.

Ques. :—Then should exceptions include also the bicycle, the motor car, etc ?

Ans. :—No. Because they do not fulfil the primary needs of man. Going over long distances with the motor speed is not an unavoidable

necessity for man. On the other hand, the needl is a necessity in life.

As an ideal I shall discard all machines. I shall desire even the destruction of my body if it is not helpful to my salvation. From that point of view I shall give up all machines. But they will remain because they are as unavoidable as the body itself. As I said before, this body is a fine machine. But we must reject it if it proves an obstruction to the highest spiritual attainment. I think that on principle nobody can differ from this proposition. The utility of the body is only to the extent that it is helpful to the realization of the self. Exactly the same is the position of the machine. (13—11—1924)

CHAPTER II

SWADESHI

IMPLICATIONS OF SWADESHI

Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. In the domain of economics I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.

The hand-loom industry is in a dying condition. Very many weaver families have lost and have retired from this once flourishing and honourable occupation. If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine,

it would be our duty to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that they are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible.

It has often been urged that India cannot adopt Swadeshi in the economic life at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon Swadeshi as a rule of life. With them it is a mere patriotic effort not to be made if it involved any self-denial.

Swadeshi, as defined here, is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. A Swadeshist will learn to do without hundreds of things which today he considers necessary. Moreover, those who dismiss Swadeshi from their minds by arguing the impossible, forget that Swadeshi, after all, is a goal to be reached by steady effort. And we would be making for the goal even if we confined Swadeshi to a given set of articles, allowing ourselves as a temporary measure to use such things as might not be procurable in the country.

There is one more objection that has been raised against Swadeshi. The objectors consider it to be a most selfish doctrine, without any warrant in the civilized code of morality. But I would urge that Swadeshi is the only doctrine consistent with

the law of humility and love. It is arrogance to think of launching out to serve the whole of India when I am hardly able to serve even my own family. It were better to concentrate my effort upon the family and consider that through them I was serving the whole nation and the whole of humanity. The motive will determine the quality of the act. I may serve my family regardless of the sufferings I may cause to others. As, for instance, I may accept an employment which enables me to extort money from people. I enrich myself thereby and then satisfy many unlawful demands of the family. Here I am serving neither the family nor the State. Or I may recognise that God has given me hands and feet only to work with for my sustenance and for that of those who may be dependent upon me. I would then at once simplify my life and that of those whom I can directly reach. In this instance I would have served the family without causing injury to anyone else. Supposing that every one followed this mode of life, we should have at once an ideal State. Under this plan of life, in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. (14—2—1916)

SWARAJ IN SWADESHI

We have not yet realized that Swaraj is almost wholly obtainable through Swadeshi. If we have no regard for our respective languages, if we dislike our clothes, if our dress repels us, if we are ashamed to wear the sacred *shikha*, if our food is distasteful to us, our climate is not good enough, our people uncouth and unfit for our company, our civilization faulty, and the foreign attractive, in short, if everything native is bad, and everything foreign pleasing to us, I should not know what Swaraj can mean for us. It seems to me that before we can appreciate Swaraj we should have not only love but passion for Swadeshi. Everyone of our acts should bear the Swadeshi stamp. (Oct. 1917)

* * * *

The real reform that India needs is Swadeshi in its true sense. The immediate problem before us is how to feed and clothe ourselves. In 1918 we sent 60 crores of rupees out of India for buying cloth. If we continue to purchase foreign cloth at that rate, we deprive the Indian weaver and spinner of that amount from year to year without practically giving him or her any other work in exchange. No wonder a tenth at least of the population is cruelly half-starved and the majority of the rest underfed. Our forefathers were well able to clothe themselves with little effort and with perfect comfort without having to buy from the foreign markets. Without a cottage industry the Indian peasant is doomed. He cannot maintain

himself from the produce of the land. He needs a supplementary industry. Spinning is the easiest, the cheapest and the best. I know this means a revolution in our mental outlook. And it is because it is a revolution that I claim that the way to Swaraj lies through Swadeshi. A nation that can save 60 crores of rupees per year and distribute that large sum amongst its spinners and weavers in their own homes, will have acquired powers of organization and industry that must enable it to do everything else necessary for its organic growth. Some say, 'Wait till we get responsible government, and we will protect India's industry without our women having to spin and our weavers having to weave.' I venture to suggest that there is a double fallacy underlying the proposition. India cannot wait for a protective tariff, and protection will not reduce the cost of clothing. Secondly, mere protection will not benefit the starving millions. They can only be helped by being enabled to supplement their earnings by having the spinning industry restored to them. So whether we have a protective tariff or not, we shall still have to revive the hand-spinning industry and stimulate hand-weaving. Multiplication of mills cannot solve the problem. They will take too long to overtake the drain, and they cannot distribute the sixty crores in our homes. They can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded. (10—12—1919)

HONOUR OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

It involves the honour of Indian womanhood. Every one who has any connection with the mill industry knows that the women working in the mills are exposed to temptations and risks to which they ought not to be exposed. Give them the spinning wheel and no woman need ever seek any other employment than sitting at the spinning wheel. Swadeshi means even distribution of wealth from an occupation next in importance only to agriculture. It supplements agriculture and therefore automatically assists materially to solve the problem of our growing poverty. Thus Swadeshi is our veritable *Kamadhenu* supplying all our wants and solving many of our difficult problems. And an occupation which saves our honour and provides our livelihood becomes a religious duty. Swadeshi then means the creation of a most perfect organization in which every part works in perfect harmony with every other. If we succeed in bringing into being such an organization, not only is the success of Swadeshi assured, but real Swaraj comes to us as a matter of course. (21—4—1920)

MEANS OF POLITICAL & ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Economic inquiries conducted between 1798 and 1814 show how many hundreds of thousands of our men, women and children worked on this (spinning) industry—mostly in their leisure time—each day and earned crores of rupees annually. How our home-

industries came to the sad plight they are in today is an open secret, admitted by all authorities and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the problem today is not to bring about that political and economic re-organization of our country, which disturbs the West today—an organization which has led to the breaking up of the society by ceaseless struggles, bitterness, and rupture between Capital and Labour. We want to work out the real political and economic regeneration of the country by Swadeshi. And the problem of the Swadeshi is the problem of the 80% of our population who spend more than six months of the year in enforced idleness, eking, throughout the year a miserable, half-starving and half-naked existence. We must find out suitable work for them during their idle hours. We must make them a real asset and power to the nation. Pure Swadeshi alone can do it.

(28—7—1920)

We need not be afraid, by evolving the fullest Swadeshi spirit, of developing a spirit of narrowness and exclusiveness. We must protect our own bodies from disruption through indulgence before we would protect the sanctity of others. India is today nothing but a dead mass movable at the will of another. Let her become alive by self-purification, i. e. self-restraint and self-denial, and she will be a boon to herself and mankind.

The wearer of khadi from a Swadeshi standpoint is like a man making use of his lungs. A natural and obligatory act has got to be performed, whether others do it out of impure motives, or refrain

altogether because they do not believe in its necessity or utility. (1—9—1921)

KHADI, THE ESSENCE OF SWADESHI

It is believed by some that Swadeshi could be effected by an embargo on foreign exports after the attainment of Swaraj. But that Swadeshi will be no Swadeshi. It will be a virtue practised under compulsion. True Swadeshi is the invulnerable bulwark of the nation and it can only be said to be accomplished if it is practised as a national duty. Be it an end or a means, Swaraj without it is a lifeless corpse and if Swadeshi is the soul of Swaraj, Khadi is the essence of Swadeshi. (24—5—1923)

NO NATIONAL NARROW-MINDEDNESS

My definition of Swadeshi is well known. I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth. I refuse to buy from anybody anything however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care. I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments from England, pins and pencils from Austria, and watches from Switzerland. But I will not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan, or any other part of the world, because it has injured and increasingly injures the millions of the inhabitants of India. I hold it to be sinful for me to

refuse to buy the cloth spun and woven by the needy millions of India's paupers and to buy foreign cloth although it may be superior in quality to the Indian hand-spun. My Swadeshi, therefore, chiefly centres round the hand-spun khaddar and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India. My nationalism is as broad as my Swadeshi. I want India's rise so that the whole world may benefit. I do not want India to rise on the ruin of other nations. If, therefore, India was strong and able, India would send out to the world her treasures of art and health-giving spices, but would refuse to send out opium or intoxicating liquors although the traffic may bring much material benefit to India.

(12—3—1925)

SWADESHI WITHOUT KHADI—BODY WITHOUT LIFE

Ques. :—Why do you emphasize khaddar and not Swadeshi? Is not Swadeshi the principle and khaddar a mere detail?

Ans. :—I do not regard khaddar to be a detail. Swadeshi is a theoretical term. Khaddar is the concrete and central fact of Swadeshi. Swadeshi without khaddar is like the body without life, fit only to receive a decent burial or cremation. The only Swadeshi cloth is khaddar. If one is to interpret Swadeshi in the language of and in terms of the millions of this country, khaddar is a substantial thing in Swadeshi like the air we breathe. The test of Swadeshi is not the universa-

lity of the use of an article which goes under the name of Swadeshi, but the universality of participation in the production or manufacture of such an article. Thus considered mill-made cloth is Swadeshi only in a restricted sense. For in its manufacture only an infinitesimal number of India's millions can take part. But in the manufacture of khaddar, millions can take part. (17—6—1926)

THE LAW OF SWADESHI

Swadeshi is the law of laws enjoined by the present age. Spiritual laws like Nature's laws need no enacting; they are self-acting. But through ignorance or other causes man often neglects or disobeys them. It is then that vows are needed to steady one's course. A man who is by temperament a vegetarian, needs no vow to strengthen his vegetarianism. For, the sight of animal food, instead of tempting him, would only excite his disgust. The law of Swadeshi is ingrained in the basic nature of man, but it has today sunk into oblivion. Hence the necessity for the vow of Swadeshi. In its ultimate and spiritual sense, Swadeshi stands for the final emancipation of the human soul from its earthly bondage. For, this earthly tabernacle is not its natural and permanent abode, it is a hindrance in its onward journey, it stands in the way of its realizing its oneness with other lives. A votary of Swadeshi, therefore, in his striving to identify himself with the entire creation, seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body.

If this interpretation of Swadeshi be correct, then it follows that its votary will as a first duty dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the rest, but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be apparent only. Pure service of one's neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are remotely situated; rather the contrary. 'As with the individual so with the universe' is an unfailing principle which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene' and runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition but fails in his duty towards his neighbours also. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependants. Naturally they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have a claim on me, and look to me for help and support. Suppose now I leave them all at once and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependants out of gear, while my gratuitous knight-errantry would more likely than not disturb the atmosphere in the new place. Thus a culpable neglect of my immediate neighbours and an unintended disservice to the people whom I wish to serve would be the first fruits of my violation of the principles of Swadeshi.

"It is better to die performing one's duty or *swadharma*, but *paradharma*, or another's duty is

fraught with danger." What the Gita says with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to Swadeshi also, for Swadeshi is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

It is only when the doctrine of Swadeshi is wrongly understood that mischief results, e. g. it would be a travesty of the doctrine of Swadeshi, if in order to coddle my family I set about grabbing money by all means, fair or foul. The law of Swadeshi requires me no more than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the universal code of conduct. The practice of Swadeshi can never do harm to anyone; and if it does, it is not *swadharma* but egotism that moves me.

There may come occasions when a votary of Swadeshi may be called upon to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. In Swadeshi there is no room for selfishness or if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type which is not different from the highest altruism. Swadeshi in its purest form is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument that I hit upon khadi as a necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its application to society. "What is the kind of service" I asked myself, "that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time, that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the

crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live," and the reply came that it is the universalization of khadi or the spinning wheel alone that can fulfil these conditions.

It is the greatest delusion to suppose that the duty of Swadeshi begins and ends with merely spinning so much yarn anyhow and wearing khadi made from it. Khadi is the first indispensable step towards the discharge of *Swadeshi Dharma* towards society. There are some men who wear khadi but in all other things indulge their taste for foreign manufactures with a vengeance. Such men cannot be said to be practising Swadeshi. They are simply following the fashion. A votary of Swadeshi will carefully study his environment and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not give them up, because of their defects and take to foreign manufactures.

But even Swadeshi like any other good thing can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money to promote manufactures in one's country for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be moved by

antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of self-less service that has its roots in the purest ahimsa, i. e. love.

(18—6—1931)

DEFINITION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY

An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses ; it must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian, and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers.

(23—10—1937)

CHAPTER III

THE MILL AND THE WHEEL

THE MILL AND THE WHEEL

There are friends who laugh at this attempt to revive this great art. They remind me that in these days of mills, sewing machines, or typewriters, only a lunatic can hope to succeed in reviving the rusticated spinning wheel. These friends forget that the needle has not yet given place to the sewing machine nor has the hand lost its cunning inspite of the typewriter. There is not the slightest reason why the spinning wheel may not co-exist with the

spinning mill even as the domestic kitchen co-exists with the hotels. (21-7-1920)

HAND-LOOM OR POWER-LOOM

Ques. :—The real question for consideration with us is not whether the hand-loom will or will not be able to hold its own against the powerloom, or whether it cannot feed millions of families or clothe millions more in home-made dress. The real issue is this: which will contribute to the economic or political power of a nation or country, whether the hand-loom or the power-mill, handicrafts or machine industries?

Ans. :—It is not quite clear from the above what the notions of the correspondent are about the economic and political power of this country. I cannot imagine him to seriously believe—though his arguments seem as if he does—that power can be achieved without feeding and clothing the millions of our half-starving and half-naked men, women and children. The political and economic power of a nation depends even in 'this age of mechanical industrialism' not on its powerful machines but on its powerful men. We want to organize our national power. This can be done not by adopting the best method of production only but by the best method of both the production and the distribution. Production of cloth in this case can be brought about in two ways: (1) by establishing new mills and increasing the output or producing capacity of each mill and (2) by increasing the number of hand-looms and improving them. All

these activities can go together. The eminent economist Prof. Radha Kamal Mukerjee has said that it is wrong to think that there is competition between hand-loom and power-mill. (28–7–1920)

SUPPLEMENTARY OCCUPATION FOR MILLIONS

The *Leader* considers that I am putting back the hands of the clock of progress by attempting to replace mill-made cloth and mill-spun yarn by hand-woven cloth and hand-spun yarn. Now I am making no such attempt at all. I have no quarrel with the mills. My views are incredibly simple. India requires nearly 13 yards of cloth per head per year. She produces, I believe, less than half the amount. India grows all the cotton she needs. She exports several million bales of cotton to Japan and Lancashire, and receives much of it back in manufactured calico, although she is capable of producing all the cloth and all the yarn necessary for supplying her wants by hand-weaving and hand-spinning. India needs to supplement her main occupation, agriculture, with some other employment. Hand-spinning is the only such employment for millions. (18–8–1920)

SPINNING EVEN AS COOKING

Even as each home cooks its own food without difficulty so may each home spin its own yarn. And just as, inspite of every home having its own kitchen, hotels continue to flourish, so will mills

continue to supply our additional wants. But even as because of our private kitchens we would not starve if every hotel was through some accident closed, so would we by reason of domestic spinning not have to go naked even if every mill by a blockade from the West had to stop work.

(8-9-1920)

HAND-SPINNING FOR FOREIGN CLOTH BOYCOTT

The mills do not and cannot immediately manufacture all the cloth we want. The reader may not know that, even at the present moment, the weavers weave more cloth than the mills. The way to carry out a successful boycott of foreign cloth is to increase the output of yarn and this can only be done by hand-spinning. The householder has to revise his or her ideas of fashion and, at least for the time being, suspend the use of fine garments which are not always worn to cover the body. He should train himself to see art and beauty in the spotlessly white khaddar and to appreciate its soft unevenness.

(19-1-1921)

NO ROOM FOR MILL CLOTH

Our weavers today generally weave foreign yarn. In fact they are supporting foreign spinners. I would not mind it much if they were doing something else instead. When spinning was almost compulsorily stopped, nothing replaced it save slavery and idleness. Our mills cannot today spin enough for our wants, and if they did, they would

not keep down prices unless they were compelled. They are frankly money-makers and will not therefore regulate prices according to the needs of the nation. (16–2–1921)

Ques. :—If hand-spun and hand-woven khadi, whether cotton, wool or silk, is to be the order of the day, what is the place of mill cloth in the national economy?

Ans. :—If millions of villagers could receive, understand and take up the message of the spinning wheel today, I know that there is no room for mill cloth, whether foreign or Indian, in our domestic economy, and that the nation will be all the better for its entire disappearance. This statement has nothing to do with machinery or with the propaganda for boycott of foreign cloth. It is purely and simply a question of the economic conditions of the Indian masses. But unless Providence comes to the rescue and miraculously and immediately drives the masses to the spinning wheel as to a haven of refuge, the Indian mills must continue to supplement the khadi manufacture for a few years to come at any rate.

(23–2–1922)

MILLS NEED NO PATRONAGE

Just as we should not on any pretext whatsoever use foreign cloth, we should not use cloth manufactured in our mills. I must distinguish between the two prohibitions. Boycott of foreign cloth is a vital necessity for all time. There is no question of a permanent national boycott of mill cloth. But Indian mills alone can never supply the

present demand for cloth, whereas the charkha and the hand-loom can. But khadi, the product of the charkha, has yet to become popular and universal. It can only be so if the thinking portion of India will make the commencement. They must, therefore, restrict their use of cloth to khadi only. Our mills need no patronage from us. Their goods are popular enough. Moreover, the nation has no control over the mills. They are not philanthropic institutions. They are frankly selfish. The peasantry of India is among the most industrious in the world as it is perhaps also the idlest. Both its industry and idleness are imposed upon it. It must work to make its fields yield their harvest. The East India Company by killing hand-spinning made it idle when it had no full labour to do. The pesantry will now return to charkha only when we set the example. Mere precept will produce little impression upon it. (22-5-1924)

WHEEL A SOURCE OF INCOME TO MILLIONS

A friend suggests: "Substitute hand-spinning with machine spinning. Erect a spinning mill in every taluka. Nationalize the profits. Only patriots should work the mills, not for gain, but for love of the country. The cloth woven should be confined to the respective talukas. You thus save waste of time and freight. To start with, organize one taluka in this manner."

The friend has forgotton the central truth that the wheel furnished occupation and a small

income to the millions who must have an additional income if they are not to starve. It is not possible to put up a hand-loom in every home. A loom in every village, and a charkha in every home is the formula. If a spinning mill is put up in every taluka, it will result in nationalizing the exploitation of the many by the few. All cannot be employed in a taluka mill. Moreover we must import the machinery needed for over 2,000 talukas. And the experts for managing and working the mills will have to be trained. Mills cannot grow up like mushrooms, as charkhas can. The failure of a charkha is felt by nobody; the failure of a taluka mill will mean consternation among the people of the taluka concerned.

(26-6-1924)

WHAT ABOUT MILL SHAREHOLDERS?

A correspondent writes:

"By insisting on the wholesale adoption of khaddar you will be putting a large number of mill-owners and a considerably larger number of shareholders, who have sunk their all in mill shares in the earnest hope of eking out a comfortable living with decent dividends, to terrible loss and distress; while you hope to bring prosperity to a very large number of lower orders who know no respectability and can in any way make both ends meet, you will doubtless be bringing ruin to an equally large or at least to a very considerable number of high and middle class men."

I wish the correspondent's fears were realized.

Then he will discover that the impending ruin of mills and shareholders of mills will be the time of their own and India's salvation. He will discover then that India will be pulsating with a new life and the middle class will be drawing their sustenance not as now from a starving peasantry but from prosperous farmers. A little reflection will enable the correspondent to realize that he and the rest of the shareholders as well as the directors of the mills will have to co-operate with the people before the spinning wheel is so established as to oust the mills. Let the correspondent derive consolation from the fact that the spinning wheel has to displace nearly sixty crores worth of foreign cloth before it can touch the Indian mill cloth.

But, for reasons I have stated, every one of us must simply think of khadi to the exclusion of even Indian mill cloth. Our mills need no patronage from me or anyone else. They have their own agencies and peculiar methods of advertising their wares. For those who are within the Congress beat to have the option of using mill-spun is to kill the khadi industry. Khadi needs all the protection that can be given to it before it can produce an impression upon the market.

If the middle class people voluntarily suffer losses for the sake of the 'lower classes', it would be but tardy reparation for their participation in the latter's exploitation. Even so must indigenous mills suffer, if need be, for the sake of those on whose poverty their fortunes are built.

(17–7–1924)

1619—3

KHADI ONLY SEEMINGLY DEAR

A sober friend writes: "Khadi even today is much dearer than mill cloth, and it is doubtful if it lasts sufficiently long to balance its costliness. At present only those who are swayed by strong sentiment and who have spare money with them can indulge in the luxury of khadi. This is a sort of bounty, but what can bounty by itself achieve? It will fail in its object if the system of production is defective. If one rightly interprets your utterances the charkha movement aims at making villages self-sufficient so far as cloth is concerned; that is to say, every cottage should spin for itself. But can it be said that the production is increasingly carried on in this direction? How many villages have become self-sufficient or about to be so? Disposal is made possible by appeals to feelings which is not always the right way."

Khadi is only seemingly dear. It is wrong to compare khadi with other cloth by comparing the prices of given lengths. The cheapness of khadi consists in the revolution of one's taste. The wearing of khadi replaces the conventional idea of wearing clothes for ornament by that of wearing them for use. But sentiment is a most powerful factor in the world. It is necessary to provide bounty for khadi at the present moment. What the State will not do must be done by the patriotic sentiment of the people. The aim of self-sufficiency can be fully achieved if we who desire to serve the masses realize the need of the spinning wheel and cultivate a taste for it and its products. (7–8–1924)

WHY NOT ENCOURAGE SWADESHI MILLS?

Ques. :—Why are the indigenous mills not invited to take part in the foreign cloth boycott movement? Why should not the Congress workers directly encourage and advertise indigenous mill cloth side by side with khadi?

Ans. :—Khadi cannot be pushed side by side with mill cloth. Given the choice, it must be confessed with regret that the unthinking multitude will prefer the apparently cheaper and easily obtainable calico to the apparently dearer and coarse-looking and not easily obtainable khadi. It follows, therefore, that Congress workers, as far as their influence can reach, must preach khadi to the exclusion of mill cloth. (4—7—1929)

HUMAN VALUE & MONETARY VALUE

I learnt in Madura that some dealers in cloth were palming off khadi cloth woven from mill-spun yarn as hand-spun and hand-woven. The use of genuine khadi consitutes some (be it ever so small) automatic return to the poor for their continuous exploitation by the comparatively rich and can in the aggregate become a mighty return, though never adequate, to the masses living in the villages. None of these functions can ever be performed by mill cloth even if every mill was nationalized. In the mill industry, even if it was conducted purely as a trust for the nation and ably managed, there could never be automatic distribution and there

must be displacement of a vast amount of labour. In khadi, with the spinning wheel in every cottage, there can be no displacement of labour and there is always automatic distribution of the product of labour. Hence for me there can be no comparison between khadi and mill cloth, there can be no juxtaposition. For, the two are not of the same kind. Khadi may never reach the finish of the mill cloth, nor its variety, nor yet its cheapness in terms of the market. The measurement for each is different. Khadi represents human values; mill cloth represents mere metallic value. (9—2—1934)

MILL CLOTH FOR EXPORT

Ques. :—Why not have Indian people use Indian hand-spun cloth and keep her mills busy for the export of manufactured cloth and yarn?

Ans. :—I would not mind such a thing. But it must be in order to supply the felt needs of the country which received our cloth. I have no idea of exploiting other countries for the benefit of India. We are suffering from the poisonous disease of exploitation ourselves, and I would not like my country to be guilty of any such thing. (29-9-1940)

CHAPTER IV

WHY THE CHARKHA

THE KAMADHENU FOR INDIA

The *Servant of India* has a fling at spinning. Spinning does protect a woman's virtue, because it enables women, who are today working on public roads and are often in danger of having their modesty outraged, to protect themselves, and I know no other occupation that lakhs of women can follow save spinning. Let me inform the jesting writer that several women have already returned to the sanctity of their homes and taken to spinning which, they say, is the one occupation which means so much *barkat* (blessing). I claim for it the properties of a musical instrument, for whilst a hungry and naked woman will refuse to dance to the accompaniment of a piano, I have seen women beaming with joy to see the spinning wheel work, for they know that they can through that rustic instrument both feed and clothe themselves. I can only think of India's *Kamadhenu*, and the spinning wheel is that for India. (16—2—1921)

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We should understand that it was not even so much the military drain as the loss of this supplementary industry that sapped India's vitality and made famines an ever-recurring event in Indian life. (20—4—1921)

MEANS OF MASS EDUCATION

A correspondent in the course of his remarks hopes that the movement will be so organized that the spinners may not weary of it.

They are not likely to weary, for to them it is a source of livelihood to which they were used before. It had dried up because there was no demand for their yarn. Townspeople who have taken to spinning may weary, if they have done so as a craze or a fashion. Those only will be faithful who consider it their duty to devote their spare hours to doing what is today the most useful work for the country. The third class of spinners are the school-going children. I expect the greatest results from the experiment of introducing the charkha in the national schools. If it is conducted on scientific lines by teachers who believe in the charkha as the most efficient means of making education available to the seven and a half lakhs of villages in India, there is not only no danger of weariness, but every prospect of the nation being able to solve the problem of financing mass education without any extra taxation and without having to fall back upon immoral sources of revenue. There are enough weavers and enough looms in India to replace the whole of the foreign import of cloth. It should be understood that our looms are engaged in weaving the fine yarn imported from Japan and Manchester. We must utilize these for weaving hand-spun yarn. And for that purpose the nation has to revise its taste for the thin, tawdry and useless muslins. I see no art in weaving muslins that do not cover

but only expose the body. Our ideas of art must undergo a change. We have therefore to ask the fashionable, on the one hand to be satisfied with coarser garments; we must educate the spinners on the other hand to spin finer and more even yarn.

(29—6—1921)

SPINNING AS DHARMA FOR WOMEN

The spinning wheel should be, as it was, the widow's loving companion. But for you who will read this appeal, it is presented as a duty, as *dharma*. If all the well-to-do women of India were to spin a certain quantity daily, they would make yarn cheap and bring about much more quicklc than otherwise the required fineness. The economis and the moral salvation of India thus rests mainly with you. The future of India lies on your knees, for you will nurture the future generation. You can bring up the children of India to become simple, God-fearing and brave men and women, or you can coddle them to be weaklings unfit to brave the storms of life and used to foreign fineries which they would find it difficult in after life to discard.

(11—8—1921)

Ques. :—Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin?

Ans. :—Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the course of every pice that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write.

(13–10–1921)

GREATEST VOLUNTARY CO-OPERATION

Probably very few workers have noticed that progress of hand-spinning means the greatest voluntary co-operation the world has ever seen. It means co-operation among millions of human beings scattered over a very wide area and working for their daily bread. Hand-spinning is impossible without the willing and intelligent co-operation of millions of human beings. Its successful reintroduction does need skilful endeavour, honesty, and co-operation on the largest scale known to the world. And if India can achieve this co-operation, who should deny that India has by that one act achieved Swaraj?

(3-11-1921)

SPINNING & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

A friend writes :—

"I find that there is no difference of opinion as regards the merit of khaddar, but the hitch arises the moment they associate the movement for the spread of khaddar with your declaration that it is a preparation for civil disobedience. If it stood apart and did not form an item of the non-co-operation movement, I think that the support to this propaganda will become wider and more universal."

I have tried to show times without number that no one, save civil resisters, need think of civil disobedience in connection with khaddar. I have led many a battle of civil disobedience before khaddar was reborn. The campaigns in Africa and India

had no connection with khadi. They were not campaigns to establish Swaraj. I have suggested khaddar as indispensable for civil disobedience for Swaraj for two reasons. The first is, that Swaraj I hold to be an impossibility without khaddar becoming universal in our country. Secondly, it is the most efficient aid to mass discipline without which mass civil disobedience is impossible. There are some Englishmen who use khaddar but they will naturally repudiate even a suggestion of sympathy with civil disobedience or non-co-operation. (12–6–1924)

TWO ASPECTS OF THE WHEEL

The spinning wheel has two aspects, terrible and benign. In its terrible aspect it is calculated to bring about the only boycott we need for independent national existence, viz. that of foreign cloth. In its benign aspect it gives a new life and hope to the villager. It can fill millions of hungry mouths. It alone can bring us in touch and in tune with the villagers. (26–6–1924)

MOST POTENT INSTRUMENT

A critic contends that the peasant has not any idle hours to utilize. What leisure he has he needs. If he is idle for four months, it is because he has overworked himself for eight months and that, if he is made to work the four months at the wheel, his efficiency for eight months' work will deteriorate from year to year. In other words, according to the critic, the nation has no leisure for the charkha.

It appears to me that the critic has little, if any experience of the peasantry of India. Nor has he been able to picture to himself the way the charkha would work, and indeed is working today. The peasantry does not need to slave at the charkha. It affords a pleasant variety and recreation after hard toil. They will spin during odd moments. If the majority of the toilers were to give on an average half an hour per day they would spin enough yarn for themselves and to spare for the rest.

What is claimed for spinning is that

1. it supplies the readiest occupation to those who have leisure and are in want of a few coppers ;
2. it is known to the thousands ;
3. it is easily learnt ;
4. it requires practically no outlay of capital ;
5. the wheel can be easily and cheaply made. Most of us do not yet know that spinning can be done even with a piece of tile and splinter ;
6. the people have no repugnance to it ;
7. it affords immediate relief in times of famine and scarcity ;
8. it alone can stop the drain of wealth which goes outside India in the purchase of foreign cloth ;
9. it automatically distributes the millions thus saved among the deserving poor ;
10. even the smallest success means so much immediate gain to the people ;
11. it is the most potent instrument of securing co-operation among the people.

(21—8—1924)

LINK BETWEEN THE MASSES AND THE CLASSES

We are so weak that we want to do as little as possible. What is that little?

I can think of nothing else but the spinning wheel. The work must be easy, capable of being done by all—the learned and the ignorant, the good and the bad, young and old, men and women, boys and girls, the strong and the weak, no matter to what religion they belong. The work to be effective must be the same for all. The spinning wheel satisfies all these conditions. Therefore he or she who spins for half an hour every day serves the masses in the most efficient manner possible. The spinning wheel for us is the foundation for all public corporate life. It is impossible to build any permanent public life without it. It is the one visible link that indissolubly binds us to the lowest in the land and thus gives them a hope. But spinning will be not only the connecting link between the masses and the classes, it will be the link between the different political parties. It will become common to all the parties. They may disagree on all other things if they like, but they can agree on this at the least. (4—9—1924).

SOLID WORK FOR THE MILLIONS

Some critics say that the spinning wheel has not taken root, it is not exciting enough, it is an occupation only for women, it means a return to the middle ages, it is a vain effort against the majestic

march of scientific knowledge for which machinery stands.

In my humble opinion India's need is not excitement but solid work. For the millions solid work itself is excitement and tonic at the same time.

(26—12—1924)

THE SYMBOL OF BODY LABOUR

An American writer says that the future lies with the nations that believe in manual labour. Nations are tired of the worship of lifeless machines multiplied *ad infinitum*. We are destroying the matchless living machines, viz. our own bodies, by leaving them to rust and trying to substitute lifeless machinery for them. It is a law of God that the body must be fully worked and utilized. We dare not ignore it. The spinning wheel is the auspicious symbol of *sharir yajna*—body labour.

INTERFERENCE WITH CHOICE OF DRESS

A revered friend of mine says, I am interfering even in the people's choice of their dress. This i perfectly true. It is the duty of every servant of the nation to do so whenever it becomes necessary. I would certainly raise my voice against it, if the nation takes, say, to the pantaloon. It is wholly unsuited to our climate. It is the duty of every Indian to raise his voice against the nation using foreign cloth. The opposition really is not to the cloth being foreign but to the poverty which its importation brings in its train.

(8—1—1925)

DIVISION OF LABOUR

Ques. :—Spinning is a waste of energy and time. It took no count of the principle of division of labour.

Ans. :—Do I ask you to take it up for the whole of the day? Do I ask you to take it up as a substantive occupation? Where, then, is the breach of the principle of division of labour? Do your hearts overflow with love at the sight of your famished countrymen? By spinning you demonstrate your love for them. You spin and you make them shake off their idleness.

Ques. :—Do you propose to replace the railways with country carts? If not, how do you expect to replace mills with wheels?

Ans. :—I do not propose to replace the railways with carts because I could not do so even if I wished. Three hundred million carts could not destroy distance. But I could replace mills with wheels. For railways solve the question of speed. With mills it was a question of production in which the wheel could easily compete if there were enough hands to work as there were in India.

SPINNING AND MEDITATION

I know several young men who concentrate on God whilst they are spinning. Those who spin for sacrifice can surround the act with all that is noble and good. In Dacca some musicians called on the day of my silence to entertain me with sitar playing. Now Monday is not merely a day of silence

but it is also a day of editing. I could ill afford, therefore, to listen to their music. But I did not want to disappoint them. I therefore wrote for them a message that I would spin whilst they played on the sitar. They readily agreed. The result was that I spun better than usual. The hand was steadier for the music. I always use a noiseless charkha. It therefore did not interfere with my enjoyment of the music. On the contrary it enhanced the pleasure of listening to the music, and the music enhanced the pleasure of spinning. And neither interrupted my communion with God. The hand, the ear and the heart acted in perfect harmony. Let the sceptics test the experience for themselves.

(28–5–1925)

WHEEL HELPFUL TO SHAKE OFF LETHARGY

I claim that concentration on the charkha alone leads to Swaraj and if this is too strong a proposition, let it be put in another way—'without the charkha and all it implies there is no Swaraj, and therefore a wise economist will concentrate his attention upon the charkha alone knowing that the rest will follow.'

It is not the drain that matters so much as poverty and it is not even poverty that matters so much as idleness which was at first enforced and has now become a habit that matters. The drain may be stopped and poverty is merely a symptom, but idleness is the great cause, the root of all evil, and if that root can be destroyed, most of the evils

can be remedied without further effort. A nation that is starving has little hope or initiative left in it. It becomes indifferent to filth and disease. It says of all reforms, 'to what good?' That winter of despair can be turned into the 'sunshine of hope' for the millions only through the life-giving wheel, the charkha. (27-8-1925)

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Ques. :—Is not charkha calculated to bring about a deathlike sameness in the nation?

Ans. :—The truth is that the charkha is intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads. Behind the magnificent and keleidoscopic variety one discovers in nature a unity of purpose, design and form which is equally unmistakable. No two men are absolutely alike, not even twins, and yet there is much that is indispensably common to all mankind. And behind the commonness of form there is the same life pervading all. And so do I hold that behind a variety of occupations there is an indispensable sameness also of occupation. Is not agriculture common to the vast majority of mankind? Even so was spinning common not long ago to a vast majority of mankind. Just as both prince and peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must both labour for supplying their primary wants. The Prince may do so if only by way of symbol and sacrifice, but that much is indispensable for him if he will be true to himself and his people. Round the charkha, that is amidst the

people who have shed their idleness and who have understood the value of co-operation, a national servant would build up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle, and hundreds of other beneficial activities. Wherever charkha work is fairly established all such ameliorative activity is going on according to the capacity of the villagers and the workers concerned. (5—11—1925)

SPINNING, AN ELEGANT ART

Ques. :—Is spinning an art ? Is it not a humdrum monotonous process likely to weary the children ?

Ans. :—Well, all the evidence hitherto collected goes to show that spinning is an elegant art and that the process itself is extremely pleasant. No mechanical pull is enough to draw the various counts. And those who do spinning as an art know the pleasure they derive when the fingers and the eyes infallibly guide the required count. Art to be art must soothe. Spinning gives solace to shattered nerves.

* * * *

GATEWAY TO MY SPIRITUAL SALVATION

Ques. :—Is it not a funny thing to regard the spinning wheel as a gateway to one's spiritual salvation ?

Ans. :—I do regard the spinning wheel as a gateway to my spiritual salvation, but I recommend

it to others only as a powerful weapon for the attainment of Swaraj and the amelioration of the economic condition of the country. To those also who aspire to observe brahmacharya I do present the spinning wheel. It is not a thing to be despised, for it is experience here that speaks. A person who wants to subdue his passions has need to be calm. All commotion within him ought to cease; and so quiet and gentle is the motion of the spinning wheel that it has been known to still the passions of those who have turned it in the fullness of faith. I have been able to compose my anger by turning it. I do not mean to say that the spinner would remain calm for all the rest of the day even after the spinning is discontinued; for human passions are fleeter even than the wind, and to subdue them completely requires no end of patience. All that I claim is that in the spinning wheel they will find a powerful means of cultivating steadiness. But then, someone will ask, why do not I recommend the far more poetical rosary, if that is the purpose which it is intended to subserve? My reply to this is that the spinning wheel possesses some virtues in addition to those it has in common with the rosary. I have not prescribed it for a recluse living in a state of nature in a cave of the Himalayas and subsisting on the herbs and roots of the forest. I have placed it only before such countless persons like myself who, while living in the work-a-day world, are anxious to serve the country and to practise brahmacharya simultaneously.

(27—5—1926)

SPINNING AND CO-OPERATION

Ques. :—Is there co-operation in spinning? Does it not rather make people purely individualistic, self-centered, and keep them separate from one another even as so many pebbles?

Ans. :—The briefest and the most decisive answer I can give is : 'Go, watch any well-organized spinning centre, and test the thing for yourself. You will then discover that spinning cannot succeed without co-operation.' There must be co-operation from the very commencement. If spinning makes one self-reliant, it also enables one to understand the necessity of inter-dependence almost at every step. An ordinary spinner must find a ready market for the surplus yarn. She cannot weave it. There can be no market for her yarn without the co-operation of a large number of people. At the central office is collected seed cotton for spinners. The cotton is ginned by ginners perhaps at the centre. It is distributed then among carders who re-deliver it in the shape of slivers. These are now ready to be distributed among the spinners who bring their yarn from week to week and take away fresh slivers and their wages in return. The yarn thus received is given to weavers to weave and received back for sale in the shape of khadi. This latter must now be sold to the wearers —the general public. Thus the centre office has to be in constant living human touch with a very large number of people irrespective of caste, colour, or creed. For the centre has no dividends to make, has no exclusive care but the care of the most

needy. The centre to be useful must keep itself clean in every sense of the term. The bond between it and the component parts of the vast organization is purely spiritual or moral. A spinning centre, therefore, is a co-operative society whose members are ginners, carders, spinners, weavers and buyers—all tied together by a common bond, mutual goodwill and service. (10—6—1926)

SACRIFICIAL SPINNING

Ques. :—If everybody would spin will not the poor people who depend upon spinning for their livelihood be losers?

Ans. :—Those who are called upon to spin by way of sacrifice promote the khaddar atmosphere and make it possible to render spinning easier and by small inventions and discoveries make it more profitable. The wages of professional spinners cannot suffer in any way whatsoever by sacrificial spinning. (17—6—1926)

WHY NOT OTHER HANDICRAFTS ALSO?

A certain gentleman sending a list of various village industries has written that instead of insisting upon khadi it would be desirable to try to introduce the industries he has listed.

As a recital it is good enough. But it does not solve the problem which needs a speedy solution. For the vast bulk of the population, as also the worker in the villages, a museum of industries is simply bewildering. They should

have one universal industry. And by a process of exclusion one arrives at the irresistible conclusion that the only universal industry for the millions is spinning and no other. That does not mean that other industries do not matter or are useless. Indeed from the individual standpoint any other industry would be more remunerative than spinning. But how many can engage in it? Is it of any use to the millions of villagers? But if the villagers can reconstruct their home, begin to live again as their forefathers did, if they begin to make good use of their idle hours, all else, all the other industries, will revive as a matter of course. We make little headway because we have an unclassified catalogue of industries for the people to choose, when we should know that there is only one industry it is possible to put before all. They may not all take it up. Let those who can and wish to, by all means, take up any other. But national resources must be concentrated upon the one industry of hand-spinning which all can take up now and besides which the vast majority can take up no other. It is not enough to say that hand-spinning is one of the industries to be revived. It is necessary to insist that it is the central industry that must engage our attention if we are to re-establish the village home. (30—9—1926)

INDUSTRIALISM IS NO REMEDY

Ques. :—The national income is pitifully low. Unless we start industries able to withstand foreign competition, is it possible to increase the national

dividend? We must have a favourable balance of trade for India, and then only can the Indian peasant be made to think of sanitation, education, decency, etc. India is living yet because she has hitherto adapted herself to changing conditions. This cannot be done without the introduction of machinery and large scale production.

Ans. :—The correspondent forgets that to make India like England and America is to find some other races and places of the earth for exploitation. So far it appears that the Western nations have divided all the known races outside Europe for exploitation and that there are no new worlds to discover. Among the exploited, India is the greatest victim. Japan is taking the share of the spoils no doubt. But if India and China refuse to be exploited, what will happen to the exploiters? And if the Western nations plus Japan are likely to come to grief, in the event of India and China refusing to be exploited, what can be the fate of India trying to ape the West? Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. The evil does not lie in the use of bullock carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbours. If we have no love for our neighbours, no change however revolutionary, can do us any good. And if we love our neighbours, the paupers of India, for their sake, we shall use what they make for us; for their sake, we who should know shall not engage in an immoral traffic with the West in the shape of buying the foreign fineries and taking them to the villages. She must not therefore,

lazily and helplessly say, 'I cannot escape the onrush from the West'. She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.

(7—10—1926)

KHADDAR STANDS FOR EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

I do not believe that multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal.

Khadi stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and the most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery. Khaddar delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. It restores to the poor somewhat of what the rich have taken from them. Khaddar does not displace a single cottage industry. On the contrary it is being daily recognized that it is becoming the centre of other village industries. Khaddar brings a ray of hope to the widow's broken-up home. But it does not prevent her from earning more if she can. It prevents no one from seeking a better occupation. Khaddar offers honourable employment to those in need of some. It

utilizes the idle hours of the nation. India lives in her 7,00,000 villages. The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve, at the present moment, the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. Khaddar is an attempt to revise and reverse the process and establish a better relationship between the cities and the villages. The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers.

Khaddar has the greatest organizing power in it, because it has itself to be organized and because it affects all India. If khaddar rained from heaven, it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing co-operation of starving millions and thousands of middle class men and women, its success means the best organization conceivable along peaceful lines.

My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see it is not to be realized. I therefore work for equitable distribution. This I seek to attain through khaddar. And since its attainment must sterilize British exploitation at its centre, it is calculated to purify the British connection. Hence in that sense Khaddar leads to Swaraj.

* * *

Do you know the daily income per head of our country? Our ecnomists say that it is one anna and six pies, though even that is misleading. The average income is worked out from the figures of the income of the poor man as also of the Viceroy and the millionaires. The actual income will, therefore, be hardly three pice per head. Now if

I supplement that income by even three pice with the help of the charkha, am I not right in calling the charkha my cow of plenty? (17—3—1927)

KHADI—TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT?

Ques. :—Do you want to perpetuate the use of Khadi, or do you recommend it only for temporary use for acquiring political freedom? In the former case, does not khadi offend against aesthetics? And do you expect common people to stifle the natural grievance of the sense?

Ans. :—I do indeed seek to perpetuate khadi because it is the only means of saving the peasantry from extinction. I claim for it the ability to give the peasantry its economic freedom and, what is more, to enable the peasantry to keep the wolf from the door. The correspondent is obviously ignorant of the past history of his own country and the present evolution of khadi. When the other parts of the globe did not know the use of cotton, India set the aesthetic standard and supplied the rich nations of the West with the finest fabrics in a variety of colours. And the present evolution of khadi shows that slowly but surely it is day by day reaching the aesthetically inclined people. After all, true art can only be expressed not through inanimate power-driven machinery designed for mass production, but only through the delicate living touch of the hands of men and women.

(14—3—1929)

MIDDLEMEN IN KHADI

It has been suggested that khadi should not be sold through middlemen but manufactured by each one for himself. I like this counsel of perfection. Only it betrays ignorance of practical facts about khadi production. It also betrays gross ignorance of the technique of khadi production. It is a physical impossibility for everybody to produce his own khadi, just as it is physically impossible for every man to grow his own rice. It is not possible for dwellers in the cities of India to produce their own khadi even if they wished to do so. And for the life of me I cannot understand the philosophy lying behind the statement : 'Wear either your own khadi or foreign cloth.' Let it be known that there are millions in India who can work at the spinning wheel for eight hours a day, and that it is impossible for them to use all the khadi woven therefrom. It is the bounden duty of good citizens of India to take off the surplus product that is turned out by these brothers and sisters of theirs. Let us not also forget that it is man's social nature which distinguishes him from the brute creation. If it is his privilege to be independent, it is equally his duty to be inter-dependent. Only an arrogant man will claim to be independent of everybody else and be self-contained.

(13—4—1929)

THE THREE WAYS OF PRODUCING KHADI

Khadi can be produced in three ways :—

1. Spinning for self,
2. Spinning for hire, and
3. Spinning for sacrifice.

The first is the most important, universal, and never failing once it is organized. It is the cheapest method of khadi production, for it does away with the bother of having to find a market for the production. The second is spinning for hire for which there is great scope. But this needs capital for stocking cotton and organizing sales. But of course it also taxes our business capacity, makes us resourceful, and enables us to build up a vast organization and find honourable employment for the middle class people. The third method is noble but can be taken up only by a select class. If the nation realized the necessity of sacrifice, it could be a means of producing an unlimited quantity of yarn. All the schools conducted by municipalities can give us yarn to clothe lakhs of people. (30—5—1929)

'YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON'

Ques. :—1. India must become industrial in the Western sense.

2. The question of physical existence cannot be solved by the charkha.

3. The conditions attached to the success of the charkha make too large claims on prevailing tendencies and human nature.

4. The justification and superiority of machines lie not so much in meeting the internal needs of a country as in invading and capturing foreign markets.

5. If India is to live and fulfil her spiritual mission among men, she must modernize herself..... Let us unhesitatingly and energetically assimilate the modern industrial methods......But along with that we must practise spirituality intensely, create a mighty spiritual idealism in the mind of the nation, and a great love for the country, so that on the wings of them we may cross over the dark valley of modernism in which the West is sadly groping. Without spiritual idealism, *modernism will spell a speedy ruin.*

Ans. :—I am sorry that I am unable to subscribe to these propositions. They are obviously based upon the assumption that modern civilization is comparatively a good thing, and that it cannot be resisted with any hope of success. There is a growing body of enlightened opinion in the West which distrusts this civilization which has insatiable material ambition at one end and consequent war at the other. But whether good or bad, why must India become industrial in the Western sense? The Western civilization is urban. Small countries like England or Italy may afford to urbanize their systems. A big country like America with a very sparse population, perhaps, cannot do otherwise. But one would think that a big country, with a teeming population with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto

answered its purpose, need not, must not copy the Western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good enough for another differently situated.

The second proposition that 'the question of physical existence cannot be solved by the charkha' cannot hold water. On the contrary the question can only be answered by the charkha or its equivalent. Every writer of note, whether Indian or European has admitted the necessity of cottage industries, if India is to live physically.

The third proposition is now simply answered. 'The conditions attached to the charkha' not only make no 'large claims on the prevailing tendencies and human nature' but they are based on 'the prevailing tendencies and human nature' as they are to be found in India.

In the fourth proposition the worship of the machine age is justified not for the reason that it may meet the internal needs of a country but because it means an 'invasion and capturing of foreign markets.' Unfortunately or fortunately for India there are no foreign markets to invade and capture. The consummate exploiters of the West have 'done the trick'. We may invade and capture foreign markets, if we will; at the same time, invade and capture the foreign manufacturing countries, and if any such grand scheme is in contemplation, methinks it is more difficult of accomplishment than the task set before themselves by the votaries of the charkha.

The last proposition gives away the writer's

whole case. He will modernize India and yet retain her spirituality without which he thinks, that '*modernism will spell ruin.*' He will have India to do what experienced sages have told us is impossible of accomplishment. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' He seems to agree that the West has failed to reconcile the two. Why does he think that India can perform the impossible task? Why should it not be assumed, that, if the ancients could have done it, they would have done so long ago? Indeed it was after making the attempt that the authors of the Upanishads said 'All this is God's. Therefore live so as not to covet your neighbour's property.' Surely exploitation means usurpation. And usurpation can never be reconciled with spiritualism. (25—7—1929)

THE USE OF THE LIVING MACHINES

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God.

Millions cannot keep themselves fit by games and athletics. And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and

exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation. They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part.

(2—7—1931)

CHAPTER V

HAND-LOOM V. SPINNING WHEEL

HAND-SPINNING AND HAND-WEAVING ARE COMPLEMENTARY

Objection :—

It is said that hand-weaving gives about eight annas per day as against one anna from hand-spinning. Therefore, if a person works for only two hours per day, he will earn from hand-weaving two annas against one pice in the same time from hand-spinning. It is added that one pice would be no economic attraction to anybody, and that if hand-weaving could be presented to the people, it would be wrong to ask them to do hand-spinning instead. The protagonists of the hand-loom contend further that there is no difficulty about getting as much mill-spun yarn as may be required for India's needs and finally they say that even for the sake of keeping alive hand-weaving, which has hitherto defied the competition of weaving mills, it should be pushed with vigour and determination. Some of

the protagonists of hand-weaving even go so far as to say that the hand-spinning movement is mischievous in that it turns people's attention away from the possible industry of hand-weaving and misleads them into supporting an impossible industry which has died of its own inherent weakness.

Explanation :—In the first instance, hand-weaving is not a practicable proposition as a supplementary industry, because it is not easy to teach, it has never been universal in India, it requires several hands to work at, it cannot be done during odd moments. It has been and can only be generally an independent occupation and is in the majority of cases the sole occupation like shoe-making or smithy. Moreover hand-weaving cannot be universal in the same sense that hand-spinning can be. India needs 4,661 million yards of cloth per year. A weaver weaves on an average three-quarters of a yard per hour of rough khaddar. Therefore, if all foreign or indigenous mill-made cloth could be excluded, at the most nine million weavers working at the rate of two hours per pay would be required to produce the whole of our annual requirements. If it be contended that not so many weavers but so many families would be occupied, then the two annas for two hours would have to be distributed among many, thus materially reducing the earnings of the individual per day.

Now let us consider the possibilities of spinning. We know that it was at one time the universal supplementary industry of India. Millions have not yet forgotten the art and tens of thousands have even

now spinning wheels in their homes. Hand-spinning is, therefore, capable of immediate and limitless extension. And as it has been found that ten spinners supply one weaver, against nine million weavers ninety million spinners would be able to add to their earnings what to them will be a material income. I have assumed that very high figure of 40 rupees per year per head the average income. Unlike weaving, spinning may be interrupted any moment, and therefore it can be done during all odd moments. Spinning is learnt easily and quickly and the spinner begins to draw some thread from the very commencement. Moreover it is wrong to rely upon an unfailing supply of mill yarn. Hand-weaving and mill-weaving are not complementary propositions. They are mutually antagonistic, the tendency of weaving mills, like all machinery, always being to displace the product of the hand. If, therefore, hand-weaving could become a supplementary industry on a large scale, it would have to be solely dependent on mills which would naturally squeeze the last pie from the weaver for the supply of yarn, and would scrap it at the first opportunity. On the other hand, hand-spinning and hand-weaving are mutually complementary. It is little known that a vast number of weavers of mill yarn are in the hands of sowcars, and they must be, so long as they rely upon the mill product. The village economy demands that the weaver should receive his yarn not from the middlemen but from his fellow-worker, the farmer.

But it is said that one pice per two hours is no

economic attraction to even the poor villager. In the first place, the wheel is not meant for, it is not now presented to, any person who has a more remunerative employment. How is it that thousands of women are today walking a few miles daily or weekly to receive raw cotton and the few pice for the yarn they deliver?

I am not against the hand-loom. It is a great and thriving cottage industry. It will progress automatically if the spinning wheel succeeds. It is bound to die if the wheel fails. (11—11—1926)

TO THE WEAVERS

Every weaver who weaves yarn which is supplied by foreign mills or even by mills of India, places himself at the disposal of and at the tender mercy of the mills. You as weavers should realize that this hand-weaving which you are today controlling to a certain extent, will in time to come, slip way from your hands as soon as the mills of the world or the mills of India are ready to weave the patterns that you are today exclusively weaving. Let me inform you, if you do not know the fact already, that various able mill-owners of the world are making experiments in order to weave the patterns which are today your monopoly. It is no fault of the mill-owners or the mill industry that the mill industry is endeavouring day after day to take away the monopolies and take this trade in its own hands. To make continuous improvements in its machinery and to make continuous encroachments upon the handicrafts of

the world is really the objective and the ideal of these great industrialists. Indeed, it is the condition of their very existence that they should try to take this trade also from off your hands. What has befallen the industry of spinning will most decidedly befall the industry of hand-weaving also if the weaver will not take a leaf out of my book.

(13—10—1927)

A VAIN EFFORT

A friend writes :—

"The Bombay Government spend a large sum in helping weavers. They have appointed a marketing officer and salesmen. They give loans. Yet the weavers cannot compete with mills, and in my opinion the expenses incurred do not bear fruit. Moreover the weavers use foreign yarn as well. Side by side with this fruitless help the Government tender some help to khadi also. I do not know how far this divided loyalty is justified."

I have always held the opinion that help to the weavers who use foreign or Indian mill yarn is a waste of money and effort. I hold this view because the disappearance of the weaver of mill yarn is a question of time only. The weavers' only hope lies in a universal revival of hand-spinning.

(3—9—1939)

CHAPTER VI

ETHICAL ECONOMICS

ECONOMICS AND ETHICS

I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. It is sinful for me to wear the latest finery of Regent Street when I know that, if I had but worn the thing woven by the neighbouring spinners and weavers, that would have clothed me, and fed and clothed them. On knowing that my neighbours may not, having given up the occupation, take kindly to the spinning wheel, I must take it up myself and thus make it popular. In burning *my* foreign clothes I burn my shame. My modesty has prevented me from declaring from the house-top that the message of non-co-operation, non-violence and Swadeshi is a message to the world. It must fall flat, if it does not bear fruit in the soil where it has been delivered. (13—10—1921.)

MORAL VALUES IN ECONOMICS

Ques. :—Is the economic law that man must buy in the best and the cheapest market wrong?

Ans. :—It is one of the most inhuman among the maxims laid down by modern economists. Nor do we always regulate human relations by any such sordid considerations. An Englishman pays more for the English collier in preference to cheap Italian labour. It would be sinful for me to

dismiss a highly paid faithful servant because I can get a more efficient and cheaper servant although the latter may be equally faithful. The economics that disregard moral and sentimental considerations are like wax works that, being lifelike, still lack the life of the living flesh.

(27—10—1921)

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That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values. The extension of the law of non-violence in the domain of economics means nothing less than the introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international commerce. And I must confess that my ambition is nothing less than to see international relations placed on a moral basis through India's efforts. I do not despair of cultivation of limited mass non-violence. I refuse to believe that the tendency of human nature is always downward. The fruition of the boycott of foreign cloth through hand-spinning and khaddar is calculated not only to bring about a political result of the first magnitude, it is calculated also to make the poorest of India, whether men or women, conscious of their strength and make them partakers in the struggle for India's freedom.

(26—12—1924)

FREE TRADE AND PROTECTION

I am a confirmed protectionist. Free trade may be good for England which dumps down her manufactures among helpless people and wishes her wants to be supplied from outside at the cheapest rate. But free trade has ruined India's peasantry

in that it has all but destroyed her cottage industry. Moreover no new trade can compete with foreign trade without protection. (15—5—1924)

SNARES OF SATAN

Ques. :—Can India, even if she wants to, isolate herself and get out of the clutches of industrialism?

Ans. :—The argument to which this lover of khaddar has been involuntarily and irresistibly drawn is Satan's old device. He always goes with us half-way, and then suddenly insinuates that it is no good going further, and points to the seeming impossibility of further progress. He applauds virtue but immediately says that it is not given to man to attain it. Now the difficulty that has occurred to the friend is a difficulty that faces a reformer at every step. Have not untruth and hypocrisy permeated society? Yet those, who believe in the ultimate triumph of truth, persist in it in the absolute hope of success. A reformer never permits time to run against him, for he defies that ancient enemy. Of course, industrialism is like a force of nature, but it is given to man to control nature and to conquer her forces.

What is industrialism but a control of the majority by a small minority? There is nothing attractive about it, nor is there anything inevitable in it. If the majority simply wills to say 'no' to the blandishments of the minority, the latter is powerless for mischief. It is good to have faith in human nature. What may be hoped for is that Europe on account of her fine and scientific intellect

will realize the obvious and retrace her steps, and that from the demoralizing industrialism she will find a way out. It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.

In Europe they have nothing like the conditions of India. What may be true of Europe is not necessarily true of India. We know, too, that each nation has its own characteristics and individuality. I claim that to industrialize India in the same sense as Europe is to attempt the impossible. India is one of the few nations of the earth which have witnessed the fall of many civilizations, herself remaining scatheless. India is one of the few nations on the earth which have retained some of their ancient institutions although they have been overlaid with superstition and error. But she has hitherto shown an inherent capacity for purging herself of error and superstition. (6—8—1925)

SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OF THE WHEEL AND KHADI

I want to claim that the message of the spinning wheel and khadi is supremely a spiritual message; and it is because it is supremely a spiritual message for this land that it has got tremendous economic consequences as also political consequences. Religion to be worth anything must be capable of being reduced to terms of economics, economics to be worth anything must also be

capable of being reduced to terms of religion or spirituality. Therefore in this scheme of religion *cum* economics there is no room for exploitation.

(15—9—1927)

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The world commerce at the present moment is not based upon equitable considerations. Its maxim is, 'Buyers beware'. The maxim of khadi economics is 'Equity for All'. It therefore rules out the present soul-killing competitive method.

(27—10—1927)

NEED FOR A LIVING WAGE

It has been argued that anything that may raise the price of articles made in the villages will defeat the purpose. It is said nobody will buy the village articles if the prices are too high.

Why should the price of an article be considered too high, if it only provides a living wage for the manufacturer? The buying public has to be instructed to know the abject condition of the people. If we are to do justice to the toiling millions, we must render to them their due; we must pay them a wage that will sustain them; we must not take advantage of their helplessness and pay a wage that would hardly give them one full meal.

It is quite clear that we must refuse to compete with mill manufactures. We may not take part in a game in which we know we must lose. In terms of metal, the big combines, whether foreign or indigenous, will always be able to outbid the effort of the human hand. What we seek to do is to

substitute false and non-human economics by true and human. Not killing competition but life-giving co-operation is the law of the human being. Ignoring the emotion is to forget that man has feeling. Not the good of the few, not even the good of the many, but it is the good of all that we are made to promote if we are 'made in His own image.'

(13—7—1935)

Ques. :—What would happen to the poor spinners if there be no demand for khadi, because of its dearness due to living wage ?

Ans. :—I will put your proposition in a converse way. Supposing you gave one pie instead of two pies an hour that you give at present and supposing these helpless women were ready to accept even that miserable pittance, would you dare to do it? I say, you would not. That means that you will have to determine a point beyond which you cannot go. Call it if you will, 'a helpless minimum.' But if that minimum has to be fixed, why not fix it once and for all no matter whether it affects some of the producers for the time being adversely ? So long as the number of purchasers is limited, and the number of producers unlimited, there is no doubt that you will have to turn some of the producers away. Why not then have a deliberately fixed, high enough minimum wage to ensure these poor women at least a living wage ? Otherwise there would be no end to this unconscious exploitation.

Ques. :—Then you will now change the definition of khadi. It no longer remains hand-spun,

hand-woven cloth, but cloth hand-spun and hand-woven at a particular wage.

Ans. :—There is no doubt.

Ques. :—But spinning is a supplementary occupation, we have been telling the world all these years. It is done only in one's spare hours.

Ans. :—Yes and no. I know that there are thousands who are doing it for the whole day. To them it is not a supplementary but a substantive occupation. And even if it is not, why not give them for an hour's work what you would usually give for any other hour's work ?

Ques. :—Supposing we give them better machines and better spindles, they will automatically do more work and earn more than double the wage.

Ans. :—That they will do automatically but for no virtue of yours.

It is a question of the self-purification of all khadi-wearers. Let us not forget that our mission is the service of Daridranarayan. Difficulties there may be, but let us solve them gradually.

(10—8—1935)

We have ignored the proletariat for centuries, and whilst we have arrogated to ourselves the right of commanding their labour, the thought has never crossed us that they have a right to dictate their wage, and that labour is as much their capital as money is ours. It is time we began to think in terms of their needs, their hours of work and leisure, and their standard of living.

It is idle to argue that the spinners themselves

would plump for a smaller wage for all than a higher wage for a few. That is the argument of every exploiter and slave-owner, and indeed there were unfortunate folks amongst slaves who hugged the chains of slavery. Let us not deceive ourselves. We have made their necessity our opportunity, and have never looked at the question from their point of view. (14—9—1935)

We have all these years thought of the consumer and done precious little for the spinner, forgetting that the Association was a spinners' association, not an association of consumers. We have to be true representatives of the spinners. (19—10—1935)

A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed. I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment. I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when State-owned, will be of no avail.

Ques. :—Why not save the labour of millions, and give them more leisure for intellectual pursuits?

Ans. :—Leisure is good and necessary up to a point only. God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our foodstuffs, out of a conjurer's hat. (16—5—1936)

CHEAP AND DEAR

Life is more than money. It is cheaper to kill our aged parents who can do no work and who are a drag on our slender resources. It is also cheaper to kill our children whom we do not need for our material comfort and whom we have to maintain without getting anything in return. But we kill neither our parents nor our children, but consider it a privilege to maintain them no matter what their maintenance costs us. Even so must we maintain khadi to the exclusion of all other cloth. It is the force of habit which makes us think of khadi in terms of prices. We must revise our notion of khadi economics. And when we have studied them from the point of view of the national well-being, we shall find that khadi is never dear. We must suffer dislocation of domestic economy during the transition stage. (10—12—1938)

CHAPTER VII

ECONOMICS OF KHADI

LOCAL CONSUMPTION

I have not omitted, to the extent I have been able during the Harijan tour, to study the whole problem of khadi. And I have found that the time has come for khadi workers to emphasize more than ever before the necessity of greater concentration on the observance of the laws of khadi economics. Some of them are essentially different from those that govern general economics. Thus, as a rule, articles manufactured in one place are

sent or attempted to be sent to all parts of the world. Those who manufacture the articles need not use them at all. Not so with khadi. Its peculiarity is that it has to be used where it is produced and preferably by the spinners and weavers themselves. Thus the demand for khadi when thus used is automatically assured. No doubt this ideal will never be reached. But the worth of khadi will always be measured by the extent to which the ideal is reached. Let this be borne in mind that khadi can be permanent only when it has obtained a permanent footing as a village wear. (27—4—1934)

THE ECONOMICS OF KHADI

Khaddar in a sense is purely an economic proposition. A khaddar organization must be a business concern before everything else. The democratic principle, therefore, cannot apply to it. Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas, involving sometimes a war to the knife between these different ideas. There can be no room for such conflict within a business organization. Imagine parties, groups and the like in a business concern. It must break to pieces under their weight. But a khadi organization is more than a business concern. It is a philanthropic institution designed to serve demos. Such an institution cannot be governed by popular fancy. There is no room in it for personal ambition.

In reorganizing your khadi production you should not forget that the science of khadi in some respects works on lines diametrically

opposite to that of ordinary business. You know how Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, after laying down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed, went on to describe certain other things which constituted the 'disturbing factor' and prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the 'human element.' Now it is this 'human element' on which the entire economics of khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's pure economic motive constitutes the 'disturbing factor' that has got to be overcome. What applies to the production of mill cloth, therefore, does not apply to khadi. Debasing of quality, adulteration, pandering to the baser tastes of humanity, are current staple in commercialized production; they have no place in khadi, nor has the principle of highest profit and lowest wages any place in khadi. On the contrary there is no such thing as pure profit in khadi. And there should be no loss. Loss there is, because we, the workers, are still incompetent novices. In khadi the prices realized return to the prime producers, the spinners, the others getting no more than their hire.

Then take the question of standardization. You cannot enforce it in khadi. As Rajagopalachari once remarked, a poor ordinary spinner cannot always spin thread of a uniform quality. She is not a machine. Today she may be unwell, tomorrow her child may be ill and her mind may be distracted. If you have love for the poor spinner or her child, you will not insist on having smooth, even thread

always, but be satisfied with what she can give, so long as she gives her best in the condition in which she finds herself at the moment. The sacred touch of her hand gives life and history to khadi which the machine-made yarn can never give. The art that is in the machine-made article appeals only to the eye; the art in khadi appeals first to the heart and then to the eye. (21—9—1934)

IS KHADI ECONOMICALLY SOUND?

If by the question is meant whether khadi can compete in price with Japanese 'fent' or even with the cloth manufactured by the Indian Mills, the answer must be emphatically 'no'. But the negative answer would have to be given about almost everything turned out by man power as against labour-saving machine power. It would have to be so even with regard to goods manufactured in Indian factories. Cloth, iron and sugar made in factories require State aid in some form or other to withstand foreign competition. It is wrong to put the question in that way at all. In the open market a more organized industry will always be able to drive out a less organized one, much more so when the former is assisted by bounties and can command unlimited capital and can therefore afford to sell its manufactures at a temporary loss. Such has been the tragic fate of many enterprises in this country.

Any country that exposes itself to unlimited foreign competition can be reduced to starvation and therefore subjection if the foreigners desire it. This is known as peaceful penetration. One has to

go only a step further to understand that the result would be the same as between hand-made goods and those made by power-driven machinery. We are seeing the process going on before our eyes. Little flour mills are ousting the *chakki*, oil mills the village-*ghani*, rice mills the village *dhenki*, sugar mills the village *gud*-pans, etc. This displacement of village labour is impoverishing the villagers and enriching the monied men. If the process continues sufficiently long, the villages will be destroyed without any further effort. And the tragedy of it all is that the villagers are unconsciously but none the less surely contributing to their own destruction. With all these deadly admissions, what do I mean by saying that khadi is the only true economic proposition? Let me then state the proposition fully: "Khadi is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, male or female is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every one of the villages in India; or till sufficient cities are built up to displace the villages so as to give the villagers the necessary comforts and amenities that a well-regulated life demands and is entitled to". I have only to state the proposition thus fully to show that khadi must hold the field for any length of time that we can think of.

The present pressing problem is how to find work and wages for the millions of the villagers who are becoming increasingly pauperized. The

people are becoming poorer economically, mentally and morally. They are fast losing the will to work, to think, and even to live. It is a living death that they are living. Khadi supplies them with work, tools and a ready market for their manufactures. It gives them hope where but yesterday there was blank despair.

Ques. :—Then why has khadi made so little progress, if it is such a hopeful proposition?

Ans. :—The progress khadi has made in terms of the millions, though little in itself, is comparatively the largest of all the other single industries. It distributes yearly the largest amount as wages among the largest number of wage-earners in the villages with the minimum of overhead charges, and every pice practically circulates among the people. Khadi has to work against almost settled prejudices among the villagers, against unscrupulous competition without State protection, and against the prevalent opinion of so-called experts in the science of economics, against even the demand of khadi wearers for progressively cheaper khadi. It is thus largely a question of the education of the villagers and the city-dwellers in the true economics for this land of tears. I therefore maintain that, though yard per yard khadi may be dearer than mill-made cloth, in its totality and in terms of the villagers it is the most economic and practical proposition without a rival. Khadi may be interpreted to include other village industries for the purpose of a thorough examination of the proposition.

(20—6—1936)

CHAPTER VIII

KHADI SCIENCE

KHADI SCIENCE

I have often said that if khadi is a sound economic proposition, it is also a science and a romance. I believe there is a book called *The Romance of Cotton* wherein the origin of cotton has been traced and an attempt made to show how its discovery altered the course of civilization. Everything can be turned into a science or a romance if there is a scientific or a romantic spirit behind it. Some people scoff at khadi and betray signs of impatience or disgust when one talks of hand-spinning. But it ceases to be an object of disgust or ridicule immediately you attribute to it the power of removing India-wide idleness, unemployment and consequent pauperism. It need not be, as a matter of fact, a panacea for the three ills. To be absorbingly interesting, the mere honest attributing of the power is enough. But you cannot attribute that potency to khadi and pursue it as some do in the manner of an ignorant needy artisan who gins, cards, spins, or weaves because he must for his bread. A believer in its potency will pursue it in a deliberate, wise, methodical manner and in a scientific spirit, taking nothing for granted, testing every proposition, checking facts and figures, undaunted by defeats, unelated by petty successes, never satisfied till the goal is reached. A science to be science must afford the fullest scope for satisfying the hunger of body, mind and soul. (16—1—1937)

WORKERS SHOULD LEARN WEAVING

It is now more than 21 years since the khadi movement began. Still I see that on the one hand, there is a dearth of weavers to weave our yarn and, on the other hand, there are lakhs of weavers in our country who have not been persuaded to weave hand-spun yarn. We must see if there is any flaw on our part for this anomaly. The key to this will be in the khadi workers learning the processes of weaving even as a penance. Even from this very class of khadi workers we found our best spinners. They alone made so much progress in spinning possible. Similarly we should have made khadi workers weave also. It is only when we learn the art of weaving that we shall be able to understand fully the difficulties, the weavers have to encounter in weaving the hand-spun yarn, and shall be able to discover remedies for them. When we atone for our error, hand-spun yarn would so improve that it would compare well with mill-yarn. Probably we may not be able to spin yarn today as strong as the mill-yarn. Still the difference between the two will not be as much as it is now and the weavers will not have the aversion for the hand-spun yarn which they have today.

(October, 1941)*

TAKE TO THE SCIENCE OF KHADI

We did not know the khadi science. Even now we do not know it fully well. This is the reason why we stumble and advance like children, i.e., we learn to walk. We have made use of a go-cart and

still do so that we may not stagnate. Now that the A.I.S.A. has become aware of this weakness, it should do its utmost to realize its true state or it will perish. By the Association I mean here all its workers. We must remember that to make the spinners stand on their own legs and obtain independence for India through their activities is and should be the objective of the A.I.S.A. We need not be anxious on the score that we shall not be able to fulfil it. The khadi movement has come into existence in the firm belief that it will surely lead us to our objective. Therefore, even if there have been mistakes in our progress towards the ideal we have to correct them and proceed further. This includes the scientific attitude also. No science comes down in perfected form from heaven. All sciences are made and perfected by experience. Take Astronomy for instance. Many mistakes have been and are being committed. They were corrected and even now correction is going on. The same can be said of the science of khadi.

(3—4—1946)*

CHAPTER IX

REORIENTATION IN KHADI WORK

THE KHADI SPIRIT

The 'khadi spirit' means that we must know the meaning that the wearing of khadi carries with it. Every time that we take our khadi garment early in the morning to wear for going out, we should remember that we are doing so in the name of Daridranarayan and for the sake of the starving millions of India. If we have the 'khadi spirit' in us we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. The 'khadi spirit' means illimitable patience. For those who know anything about the production of khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patience whilst we are spinning, 'the thread of Swaraj'. The 'khadi spirit' means also an equally illimitable faith. Even as the spinner toiling away at the spinning wheel has illimitable faith that the yarn he spins by itself small enough, put in the aggregate, would be enough to clothe every human being in India, so must we have illimitable faith in truth and non-violence ultimately conquering every obstacle in our way. The 'khadi spirit' means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures. The 'khadi spirit' has all this capacity, but there is

one condition behind it, i.e. it ought to have the *tapascharya* of those who are behind it. Every minute of my time I am fully conscious of the fact that, if those who have consecrated their lives to khadi will not incessantly insist on purity of life, khadi is bound to stink in the nostrils of our countrymen. I am well aware that khadi cannot compete with other articles of commerce on their own platform, on their own terms. But I know this also for certain that khadi is unique and it would out-distance every article in India today.

(22—9—1927)

KHADI NISHTAH (FAITH)

Khadi workers should know that there are many important public men outside the Congress who decry khadi and would never touch it. They should know too that even in the Congress ranks there are some who do not believe in khadi, who are never tired of ridiculing it, and use it merely as a measure of discipline till they succeed in banishing it from the Congress programme. Khadi has progressed in spite of these obstacles. No doubt it would have made greater progress if we had not such opposition to contend against. But what should a khadi worker do if he, on further study, finds it necessary to declare himself against it?

I hope that after sixteen years of experience of khadi and its possibilities we have a sufficient number of confirmed believers whose faith in it is based on their own knowledge of its working. If it is still a derived faith, the prophecy of a great

journalist will undoubtedly come true that on my death khadi will also die, and that the wheels that would be broken after the natural event would be sufficient for full cremation of the body.

I suggest to them that they examine their own position, and if they have doubts about the great economic importance of khadi, let them revise their attitude.

(6—6—1936)

REAL KHADI—WEARER

Khadi has been conceived as the foundation and the image of ahimsa. A real khadi-wearer will not utter an untruth. A real khadi-wearer will harbour no violence, no deceit, no impurity. To those who will say, 'If this is khadi, we will not wear it', I will say, 'You are welcome to do what you like, but then you must forget to win Swaraj by means of truth and non-violence. Nor may I compel you to observe truth and non-violence, nor may I compel you to win Swaraj after my method.'

(26—2—1938)

THE PLACE OF SPINNING IN THE NON-VIOLENT ORDER

Those who believe that India can be freed and her freedom retained only through non-violence, will surely believe that non-violence on a mass scale can only be observed by the masses being usefully and knowingly occupied for the sake of the country. What is that one thing which all can do easily without any capital worth the name and

which in itself is calculated to soothe the nervous system? The answer will unequivocally be hand-spinning and its anterior processes.

In the States of Europe where war is a recognized institution adult males are conscripted for military service for a given number of years. In a country that wants to defend itself and regulate its life without war preparation, people have to be conscripted for productive national service. If a country's vital requirements are produced through a centralized industry, it will find it necessary to guard them even as a capitalist guards his treasures. A country whose culture is based on non-violence will find it necessary to have every home as much self-contained as possible.

(4—12—1939)

NEED THE KHADI—WEARER SPIN?

From the economic point of view it is enough to take to khadi. But if khadi is to be our weapon for winning Swaraj, spinning is of equal necessity. Khadi gives us economic self-sufficiency, whereas spinning links us with the lowest paid labour. In militarized countries every one gives a certain time for military purposes. Ours being a non-violent basis, everyone should do sacrificial spinning for a minimum period from year to year. Is it too much for us to give half an hour or one hour per day to spinning as a measure of voluntary conscription?

(2—4—1940)

NON-VIOLENCE AND THE SPINNING WHEEL

If the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the charkha and all it means. This revival cannot take place without an army of selfless Indians of intelligence and patriotism working with a single mind in the villages to spread the message of the charkha and bring a ray of hope and light into their lustreless eyes. This is a mighty effort at co-operation and adult education of the correct type. It brings about a silent and sure revolution like the silent but sure and life-giving revolution of the charkha. But the charkha cannot bring Swaraj, in fact it will not move, unless the nation has faith in non-violence. It is not exciting enough. Patriots yearning for freedom are apt to look down upon the charkha. They will look in vain to find it in history books. Lovers of liberty are fired with the zeal to fight and banish the foreign ruler. They impute all the vices to him, and see none in themselves. They cite instances of countries having gained their freedom through seas of blood. The charkha devoid of violence seems to them an utterly tame affair.

(9—4—1940)

LET US NOT FORGET THE FUNDAMENTALS

If we do not understand well the principles underlying khadi, however much of khadi we may produce, our work will deteriorate. Formerly, not only the whole of India wore khadi but also used

to export it to many big cities of the world. But today we cannot take such pride. At that time khadi was not connected with politics. During those days, kings and administrators exploited the poor by producing khadi while traders amassed wealth by selling it. Therefore even today we find it difficult to convince the people about the utility of khadi. Now we believe that khadi is the means of our salvation. Originally I conceived this in the year 1908. We should proceed in the belief that what was formerly the cause of our slavery, will now be the means of our salvation. We have therefore taken khadi to be rooted in truth and non-violence. If we forget this fundamental and go on producing khadi in any way, a time will come when we shall ourselves be destroying it. People do not so much ridicule and despise other constructive activities as they do khadi. The presence of the mills is an additional reason for their doing so. From their point of view it is excusable. They say, "Khadi was there already. How then did we happen to become slaves? How can we accept it as the means of Swaraj?" It is the duty of the Spinners' Association to answer this. If we do not hold on to our fundamentals it will result also in our degeneration. It is the duty of the workers to see that there is purity in every part of the khadi work. I do not expect today that our spinners will be all devotees of truth and non-violence; but I certainly expect this of our three thousand khadi workers. If they be not so our work will not progress and we shall perish. (Dec., 1941)*

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

I feel that as long as we are not able to carry the message of the spinning wheel to every home, our work is imperfect. This is the reason why we are still far away from our objective. There must be a large number of people amongst the seven lakhs of our villages who do not know what our khadi movement is. This is our shortcoming.

We have plied the wheel, but have plied it mechanically, without understanding its implications. If you have made your own, all that is meant by the spinning wheel, you would also have drawn from it as much content as I have done. People attribute intellectual inertia to the workers of the A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A., and those who are called Gandhites. People have regard for these workers but the latter are not able to give a clear exposition of the national situation.

We profess to be devotees of non-violence, and if we are not able to demonstrate its power, how are we Gandhites ? Really speaking there is no such thing as Gandhism. If anything really exists it is the principle of non-violence. Each worker of the A.I.S.A. should be a living embodiment of non-violence. Call them Gandhites, or *ahimsavadi* (devotees of non-violence) as you like, but they should be *tejasvi* (men of mettle).

Then the Hindu-Muslim problem, untouchability, conflicts, mis-understandings, rivalry etc. will disappear. The existence of the Association

is meant to achieve all this, and this we must 'do or die.'

We must also see whether we have made sufficient research in the spinning wheel. We have, of course, worked hard at it and made some inventions. A lot of spinning wheels have been manufactured. But we have to produce such an expert who would be fully proficient in the principles and technique of machinery. That expert should invent such a wheel as would give us more and better yarn than we are getting today. However, I shall not own defeat even if we do not get such a specialist. We have undertaken to present the spinning wheel, which for centuries represented pauperism, helplessness, oppression and forced labour as a symbol of mighty non-violent power, organization, and economic order for the present age. All this I want to be done through you.

(September, 1944)*

(From a speech to khadi workers)

CONGRESS AND THE YARN QUOTA FOR KHADI PURCHASE

Ques. :—You persuaded the Congress to adopt khadi wear for its members and introduced the rule of yarn quota for the A.I.S.A. khadi. Congressmen are prohibited from using khadi other than that certified by the A.I.S.A., and now khadi cannot be had from the Association without paying the yarn quota. Is this not compulsion?

Ans. :—True, the Congress adopted khadi, the Spinners' Association imposed the condition of the

yarn quota and khadi which is not certified by the Association is taboo for Congressmen. A certain quantity of yarn has to be given as part of the price of khadi. All this is true. But I do not find any flaw in this.

That action alone can be compulsion where there is penalty for refusing to do a particular thing. What the form of punishment should be is a different matter. There is no compulsion if I demand the price of khadi and refuse to give it free. Similarly there is some condition or other attached to membership in any institution. It is also no compulsion if subsequently any change is made in such conditions. The case of uncertified khadi is also similar. If we go in for uncertified khadi where is the guarantee of its purity and that a proper wage has been paid to the spinner and the weaver?

With the advance of time and experience, changes have to be made in the rules and regulations. The only questions to be considered are whether the change fulfils the object, is in keeping with the principle of truth and non-violence and is actuated by selfish or benevolent motives. The answer to all these questions will show that the change was to fulfil the original object and the question of compulsion does not arise. I should be thanked if I ask in lieu of my goods, yarn or any other commodity in place of money.

Let us go a little deeper. We believe that khadi is only for those who believe that non-violent Swaraj can be established by making khadi

universal. Spinning, even for a little time, by the greatest number of people will be helpful in obtaining Swaraj. We do not therefore spin under compulsion but of our own accord. An additional gain is that through spinning we come in direct contact with the poor.

Therefore, I am quite clear that there is absolutely no compulsion in demanding part of the price of khadi in the form of yarn.

(September, 1945)*

WORKER AND MONEY

Today the workers of the A.I.S.A. are spread throughout India. Their number is about 3,000. I consider this is a small number. When khadi becomes universal in India the number of these workers will increase immensely. If there be one for every village there will be seven lakhs of workers on the rolls of the Spinners' Association. This will require enormous funds. For this reason none need fear that it would be impossible to have so many workers. I never felt like that. If the work be beneficial and the people accept it, money becomes available. I have been organizing and conducting insititutions throughout my life. In my experience no institution had to close down or curtail its work for want of finance. On the other hand, my experience is that institutions had to be closed, or had to curtail their work, simply because of the lack of workers. In reply it may be said, "what else than money is the attraction for employment in big business concerns and Government service?" Those

alone who have not fully understood what is said above can raise such an objection. I never said that nothing can be achieved by money. How could we have been slaves to money if it were not capable of securing many results. What I mean to say is that if we have to be slaves of money we should give up the idea of serving the people. It is the fate of the slave to be oppressed. If we use money only as a means, taking it to be our servant, and that too with the service motive, then we shall be making proper use of it. The proper worker is our first and indispensable need for the service of the people. When we get such workers, money follows and they need not search for money. Therefore I have said that even if we get seven lakhs more of workers we can take it for granted that money is already there in our pocket for the purpose. It can however be said that we have not got so much money as may be necessary to attract people to our work. I admit this. It is the spirit and devotion that count here. Those who join a philanthropic institution like the A.I.S.A. do so with the service motive and not for pay. If they have to be paid a little, it is because the poor even as the rich have to feed themselves. But the worker receives pay only to live and keep himself fit for service. Such workers never eat or drink or wear clothes for pleasure or for fashion.

(3—11—1945)*

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Ques. :—One of the reasons given in favour of hand-spinning is that it makes one self-sufficient.

Can one who is self-sufficient serve the society more and better than one who is dependent on others? Do you mean to say that there is such a connection between self-sufficiency and social service that the more one is self-sufficient the more is his capacity for social service?

Ans.:—In order that we may answer this satisfactorily we must keep in mind the non-violent outlook because truth and non-violence form the foundation of the order of my conception. Our first duty is that we should not be a burden on society, i.e., we should be self-dependent. From this point of view self-sufficiency itself is a kind of service. After becoming self-sufficient we shall use our spare time for the service of others. If all become self-sufficient none will be in trouble. In such a state of affairs there would be no need of serving anybody. But we have not yet reached that stage and therefore we have to think of social service. Even if we succeed in realizing self-sufficiency completely, man being a social being, we will have to accept service in some form or other. That is, man is as much self-dependent as inter-dependent. When dependence becomes necessary in order to keep society in good order it is no longer dependence, but becomes co-operation. There is sweetness in co-operation; there is no one weak or strong among those who co-operate. Each is equal to the other. There is the feeling of helplessness in dependency. Members of a family are as much self-dependent as inter-dependent. There is no feeling of either mine or thine. They are all co-operators.

So also when we take a society, a nation or the whole of mankind as a family all men become co-operators. If we can conceive a picture of such co-operation we shall find that there would be no need of support from the lifeless machine. Instead of making the greatest use of machinery we shall be able to do with the least use thereof and therein lies the real security and self-protection of society.

(29—11—1945)*

NON-VIOLENT SOCIAL ORDER

Ques.:—1. The object of the constructive programme is stated to be the preparation of the people for a non-violent political order. Is this statement correct? Or will it be better to define such a social and political order as one in which no one would be able to exploit the labour of another?

2. If my definition is correct I feel that such a social and political order can be achieved even by our making the largest use of machinery. Is largest use of man-power for industry necessary for the non-violent political order, and if so, why?

Ans.:—1. Your definition is only partly correct. Its incompleteness will become clear in the answer to your second question.

2. Non-violence cannot be divided into compartments. Non-violence is an inherent characteristic of man or say, at least it should be the characteristic of man during his waking hours. Devotion to non-violence is the highest expression of his conscious state. If we consider Ahimsa from this point of view we should satisfy all our neces-

sities by the labour of our own hands. If we do not do this we shall depend upon some other power, and under such dependency we shall be unable to realize a state of fearlessness. There is also another danger in having to make great efforts for the protection of the machinery, if we make more and more use of it. That means we shall have to keep an army just as it is being done today in the world. The fact is that even if there be no danger of aggression from the outside we shall be slaves to those who will be in control of the big machinery. Take the case of the atom bomb. Even among the friendly nations some are afraid of those who have atom bombs. (29—11—1945)*

SPINNING AND AGRICULTURE

Ques. :—Why not agriculture be stressed instead of hand-spinning?

Ans. :—Agriculture is not a dying occupation in India. It requires reform and improvement. But agricultural reforms are possible under a national Government. Individual agricultural effort can leave little impression upon the masses. (30—7—1925)

Ques. :—You are emphasizing spinning more than agriculture. Is there any political reason behind it? Or is it that spinning is easier than agriculture? Or is it that all cannot take to agriculture so easily as they can to spinning?

Ans. :—With me there are no such separate compartments as social, economic and political. In what is political there is also the social and the

economic. One includes the others, though we have to make such divisions in order to have correct understanding. One of the reasons why I have not laid stress on agriculture is that my own knowledge of the same is very meagre. How can I therefore enlighten you on the subject by emphasizing it? It is not so in the case of the spinning wheel. I have acquired enough knowledge of it. The second reason is that foreign aggression has destroyed the wheel. There could be no destruction of agriculture. Its form has been so changed that it has increased our slavery. The third reason is that the skill of the hand has a very small place in agriculture. There is hardly any other industry in which the skill of the hand and the cunning of the fingures are so important as they are in the various processes that go to make khadi. The fourth reason is that the foreign power first takes hold of the land and it controls other things through land. Therefore Government help is very necessary for improvement in agriculture. For these and other reasons I have laid more emphasis on hand-spinning. (29-11-1945)*

Ques. :—The Indian villager spends 80% of his income for food and only 12% for cloth. In such a state of affairs, should not agriculture occupy the primary place in our scheme of village uplift? Will it not be proper to assign the place of the sun in the planetory system to agriculture instead of to khadi?

Ans. :—Even if the estimate given were correct, agriculture cannot take the place of the spinning wheel. The fact that the people become

industrious and shake off their lethargy by the use of the spinning wheel is in itself a very great achievement. Therein lies the key to Swaraj. The taking of the spinning wheel itself as the centre of our activities removes our short-comings. Thus so much good comes to us of its own accord simply in the wake of the spinning wheel. We should bear in mind that I have presented the wheel only for India. I would not ply it at the North Pole. If India realizes the value of the spinning wheel, she can easily secure Swaraj thereby. The wheel has found some place in the towns. This is good; but the villages have yet to take to it. They can spin and also co-ordinate it with agriculture.

(April, 1946)*

SLAVERY TO MACHINERY

Ques. :—One of the aspects of the material development of human society appears to be that man is gradually tending to move more and more from independence to dependency. Don't you feel that this is not healthy and that there will again appear the opposite tendency?

Ans. :—I take this question to mean that the society is advancing towards machinery. If I have understood the question aright, my answer is that society must get rid of its slavery to the machine. By being slaves to the machine our slavery to our senses and mind also increases immensely.

(29—11—1945)*

SPIN, KNOWING ITS FULL IMPLICATIONS

The spinner should himself do all the processes, anterior and posterior to spinning, i.e. he should do all the processes up to weaving. This is the way to Swaraj. Until now we have been producing only commercial khadi. The idea of Swaraj was of course there. Had this idea not been there, even the commercial khadi would not have progressed and possibly the Swaraj-khadi would have remained a dream. Commercial khadi was our children's cart, it taught us to walk; and it is so even now. To have carding and other things done by others was and even now is like the children's go-cart. As we go on giving up these go-carts, we are going nearer Swaraj khadi. In the A.I.S.A. production centres if the processes of carding etc. are being done separately all this should, if possible, be stopped now. Man cannot do without compromises. Therefore it has to be said that these go-carts should be given up as early as possible. One who has faith in this and understands the implications, will be the first to give them up.

We should take into consideration the present situation. Those that do spinning for wages will readily take to the anterior and posterior processes thereof, because that will increase their income. But now-a-days the number of such spinners is going down because it is easy to increase one's income by other means. For, the spinners are not worried about the propriety or impropriety. They adopt the easiest occupation. For example

thousands are earning their livelihood by picking leaves and making beedies. We have to enlighten them; make them ascend the difficult ladder of Swaraj and make them get strong while ascending. If we cannot do this we stand to lose. Therefore only such people will be helpful who will spin knowing its full implications.

One more thing has to be borne in mind. Spinning has secured its place among the several occupations. It is therefore sure to go on. We need not be anxious, therefore, in regard to commercial khadi. The problems arising out of it will have to be solved by the khadi workers. They should examine whether a particular arrangement fits in with a particular set up or not. Otherwise we would be guilty of either laziness or ignorance. One who cannot prove the corollaries of Geometry cannot be said to be proficient in it. The same can be said in respect of the khadi science also.

(3—4—1946)*

THE WHEEL AND THE ATOM BOMB

Ques. :—Has your wheel any message for America? Can the wheel be used as a weapon against the atom bomb or as a remedy for it?

Ans. :—The message of the wheel is not only for America but for the whole world. But how can this happen unless India herself adopts it fully and presents it as a living and effective example before the world. It cannot be said today that India has adopted it fully. It is no fault of the wheel. I have no doubt in my mind that the salvation

and protection not only of India but of the whole world are imbedded in it. If India becomes the slave of the machine and factories, there will be no other way left open for the world. In that case God alone can save it.

Ques. :—Do you believe that India will fully take to the wheel?

Ans. :—India is adopting the spinning wheel, but I must admit that the progress is very slow. Pandit Nehru has called khadi 'the livery of our freedom.' But it cannot become the livery of freedom so long as some fadists and poor people alone take to it. There are many things in the world which man cannot accomplish but God is omnipotent. If there be no real living power which is known as God the spinning wheel also cannot exist.

(November, 1946)*

THE NEW KHADI EPOCH

One epoch of khadi has ended. Khadi has achieved something for the benefit of the poor. Now we have to demonstrate how the poor can be self-supporting. How khadi can become the symbol of non-violence, is to be proved. That is the real work. Our faith in this has to be demonstrated.

(Message for the Charkha Jayanti. Aug., 1947)*

SHOULD WE STILL SPIN?

A friend writes: "Members of my family and I have been spinning and wearing khadi regularly. Do you insist that even after independence we should continue to spin and to wear khadi?"

This is a strange question. But many are in the same condition. This clearly shows that such people took to spinning and wearing khadi thinking that it is one of the means of gaining independence. They had no heart in the spinning or khadi. This friend forgets that independence did not mean only the removal of the foreign burden from our shoulders. That it was necessary to remove this burden first for the sake of independence is another matter. But khadi means a life which is based on the foundation of non-violence. This was the meaning of khadi before independence and even today. Rightly or wrongly I am of the opinion that the absence of non-violence today only shows that we never understood the real and essential purpose of khadi all these years. We therefore witness today anarchy in so many places and fighting between brother and brother. If the millions of villagers understand and feel that we have to obtain such non-violent independence I have no doubt that spinning and khadi wearing are more necessary today than before. They alone will bring on this earth the Kingdom of Heaven or Ramraj.

We were trying through khadi to place man above the machine, rather than allow the machinery driven by electricity or steam, to be the master. We were endeavouring through khadi to establish equality between man and man in place of the enormous inequality now existing between the poor and the rich, between the high and the low, between the man and the woman. We also endeavoured to

make the labourer independent of the capitalist instead of the capitalist exploiting labour and assuming undue prestige. If, therefore, what we did in India during the last thirty years was not wrong, we should now carry on the programme of the spinning wheel with all its allied activities with more understanding of all the implications and with greater vigour. (13—11—1947)*

CHAPTER X

SOME OTHER ASPECTS

BURNING OF FOREIGN CLOTH

(That was the time when the movement for the burning of foreign cloth was going on and the Swadeshi movement was at its height.)

A friend objects: "We seem to be losing sight of the great beautiful world to which we belong and concentrating selfishly on India, and this must (I fear) lead back to the old bad selfish nationalism."

Experience shows that the richest gifts must be destroyed without compensation and hesitation if they hinder one's moral progress. Will it not be held a sacred duty to consign to the flames most precious heirlooms if they are plague-infected? If the emphasis were on all foreign things, it would be racial, parochial and wicked. The emphasis is on all foreign cloth. The restriction makes all the difference in the world. I do not want to shut out English lever-watches or the beautiful Japanese lacquer work. But I must destroy all the choicest

wine of Europe. It is with the utmost effort that I find it possible to keep under check the evil passions of the people. The general body of the people are filled with ill-will, because they are weak and hopelessly ignorant of the way to shed their weakness. I am transferring the ill-will from men to things. Love of foreign cloth has brought foreign domination, pauperism and what is worst, shame to many a home. Hundreds of untouchable weavers of Kathiwad having found their calling gone, became sweepers for the Bombay municipality; and many of them have become physical and moral wrecks. Should we not destroy the cloth which is the cause of all this tragedy? Foreign cloth to India is like foreign matter to the body. The destruction of the former is as necessary for the health of India as of the latter for the health of the body. (1—9—1921)

Ques. :—Do you explain the beauty (spiritual or otherwise) of bonfires, when many people are going half-naked in the country and are shivering at the thought of the coming winter?

Ans. :—I do; for I know that their half-nakedness is due to our criminal neglect of the fundamental law of life in India that she should wear only hand-spun just as she must eat only home-cooked food. My giving my discarded foreign clothes to them will only prolong the agony. But if the warmth generated by the bonfires are kept up till the last piece is burnt, the warmth will last for ever, and each successive winter will see the nation more and more invigorated. (27—10—1921)

LOIN CLOTH

I know that many will find it difficult to replace their foreign cloth all at once. Millions are too poor to buy enough khadi to replace the discarded cloth. Let them be satisfied with a mere loin cloth. In our climate we hardly need more to protect our bodies during the warm months of the year. Let there be no prudery about dress. India has never insisted on full covering of the body for the males as a test of culture. I give the advice under a full sense of my responsibility. In order, therefore, to set the example, I propose to discard at least up to the 31st of October my *topi* and vest, and to content myself with only a loin cloth, and a *chaddar* whenever found necessary for the protection of the body. I adopt the change, because I have always hesitated to advise anything I may not myself be prepared to follow, and also because I am anxious by leading the way to make it easy for those who cannot afford a change on discarding their foreign garments. I consider the renunciation to be also necessary for me as a sign of mourning, and a bare head and a bare body is such a sign in my part of the country. That we are in mourning is more and more being borne home to me as the end of the year is approaching and we are still without Swaraj. I wish to state clearly that I do not expect co-workers to renounce the use of the vest and the *topi* unless they find it necessary to do so for their own work.

(29—9—1921)

* * *

In 1921 Maulana Mahomed Ali was arrested at Waltair whilst he and I were going on a tour to the South. He was torn from Begum Mahomed Ali who was travelling with us. I was deeply moved. She bore the separation bravely and attended meetings in Madras. I left her at Madras and went as far as Madura. On the way I saw in our compartment crowds that were wholly unconcerned with what had happened. Almost without exception they were bedecked in foreign fineries. I entered into conversation with some of them and pleaded for khadi. For I had no other way open to me to secure the release of the Ali Brothers save through khadi. They shook their heads as they said, 'We are too poor to buy khadi, and it is so dear.' I realized the substratum of truth behind the remark. I had my vest, cap, and full dhoti on. When these uttered only partial truth, the millions of compulsorily naked men, save for their langoti four inches wide and nearly as many feet long, gave through their bare limbs the naked truth. What effective answer could I give them, if it was not to divest myself of every inch of clothing I decently could and thus to a still greater extent bring myself in a line with the ill-clad masses? And this I did the very next morning after the Madura meeting.

Here then there is no question of loin cloth civilization. The adoption of the loin cloth was for me a sheer necessity. But in so far as the loin cloth also spells simplicity let it represent Indian civilization.

(30—4—1931)

SPINNING WHEEL FOR MAN OR FOR WOMAN?

I venture to suggest to the students all over India to suspend their normal studies for one year and devote their time to the manufacture of yarn by hand-spinning.

Ques. :—If it is so necessary to manufacture yarn why not pay every poor person to do so?

Ans. :—Hand-spinning is not and never was a calling like weaving, carpentry etc. Under the pre-British economy of India spinning was an honourable and leisurely occupation for the women of India. It is difficult to revive the art among the women in the time at our disposal. But it is incredibly simple and easy for the school-goers to respond to the nation's call. Let no one decry the work as being derogatory to the dignity of man or students.

It was an art confined to the women of India because the latter had more leisure. And being graceful, musical and as it did not involve any great exertion, it had become the monopoly of women. But it is certainly as graceful for either sex as is music for instance. In hand-spinning is hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine, and the cheapening of prices. In it is hidden the secret of Swaraj. The revival of hand-spinning is the least penance we must do for the sin of our forefathers in having succumbed to the satanic influence of the foreign manufacturer. The school-goers will restore

hand-spinning to its respectable status. They will hasten the process of making khaddar fashionable. For no mother or father worth the name will refuse to wear cloth made out of yarn spun by their children. (19—1—1921)

* * *

Obj. :—To ask able-bodied men to sit for spinning, like women, is what appears odd in the eyes of most of the people. All of us cannot take up the work which has been associated in our country, for centuries, with women. Again, I would have consented to shake off this acquired notion, could I be persuaded to believe that at least the female population of the country have taken up the cause of spinning and that it still requires further support from the male population. Besides, the question of foreign cloth in India is not so much of men's creation as of women's, and therefore, I think, to press the use of the spinning wheel and khaddar on men, instead of women, is to begin the solution at the wrong end.

Expl. :—Under the present conditions, men do not ordinarily get the privilege or the opportunity of addressing women. It should also be known that the women cannot act without the consent of men. I can quote several instances where men have prevented women from adopting the charkha or khaddar. Thirdly, women cannot make the inventions and the changes that men can make. Had the movement of spinning been confined only to women, it would have been impossible to make the improvements that the charkha has undergone

during the past four years or to organize spinning in the manner it has been. Fourthly, it is contrary to experience to say that any vocation is exclusively reserved for one sex only. Why is spinning not a manly occupation? Why is anything that will bring about the economic and spiritual uplift of India not manly enough for men? It was a man who invented the spinning jenny. Needle work is essentially women's work, but the master tailors of the world are men, and it was a man who invented the sewing machine. If we are to clothe ourselves by the joint effort of millions, the politician, the poet, the potentate, the pandit and the pauper, male or female, Hindu or Mussalman, Christian, Parsi, or Jew, will have religiously to give half an hour to spinning for the sake of the country. (11—6—1925)

SPINNING FRANCHISE

Ques. :—How could the Congress compel its members to spin? Persuasion and not compulsion should be the method.

Ans. :—Has the Congress any right to say that its members shall not drink? Will that be a restriction of the freedom of the individual too? If the Congress exercised that right of enjoining abstinence from drinking, there would be no objection. Why? Because the evils of drink are obvious. Well, I say that in India today, where millions are on the brink of starvation and plunged in utter misery, it is perhaps a much worse evil to import foreign cloth. Think of the starving millions

of Orissa. When I went there I saw the famine-stricken. They were merely skin and bone, only waiting to die. They were then in that condition, because they would under no circumstances work. This aversion from work is a greater evil than drink itself. Now how can we solve the problem of getting work out of people like these? I see no way except that of universalizing spinning. Every yard of foreign cloth brought into India is one bit of bread snatched out of the mouths of the starving poor. If you could visualize as I can the supreme need of the hour, which is to give India's starving millions a chance to earn their bread with joy and gladness, you would not object to the spinning franchise. I take the Congress to be a body of men and women who accept the paramount necessity of spinning. Why should it not ensure the integrity of membership in the body by making it compulsory for every member to spin? And you talk of persuasion! What can be better persuasion than that every member of the Congress spins regularly a certain quantity of yarn every month? How would it be honest for the Congress members to ask people to spin, when they do not spin themselves?

Ques.:—How can you exclude people who do not spin from the Congress? They may be doing valuable service to the nation in other ways.

Ans.:—Why not? What is the reason for the property franchise? Why is it necessary for a man to pay four annas to be a member? And why is age considered a necessary qualification? John Stuart Mill, however clever he may have been

when he was seven years old, had no franchise at that age. Some men will have to be excluded under any franchise. No, today many will not accept my position, but I have faith that the day will come—it may be after my death—when men will say that after all what Gandhi said was right.

(20—11—1924)

CHARKHA IN THE VEDAS

From the essay of Pandit Satavalekar of Aundh: 'It is written in the Rig Veda in one place as follows :—

> "Having spun the thread and given it a shining colour weave it without knots, and so guard the pathways which the enlightened have chalked out, and thinking well, lead posterity unto the divine Light" '

If the translation is at all correct the *mantra* proves not merely the existence of spinning in the Vedic times, but that it was the calling of the noblest men and women as well as of the humblest.

> "Hundred and one artists are working at the sacrifice which through the myriad threads overspreads the earth. Here are the elderly guardians. They watch the processes saying, 'weave on here, do this right there."

Thus we see that spinning and weaving was regarded as a sacrifice even in those ancient days and commanded the protecting care of the elders. There is a *mantra* which proves that the soldiers of those days were not above doing these processes,

and that the bridegroom's garment was always made by the bride as is still the custom in Assam.

(2—6—1927)

KHADI SAREE AND THE PROVINCIAL STYLES

A sister from Maharashtra writes : " It is the custom among us to use only nine yard sarees but being poor we find it difficult to buy them. But as for myself, I am prepared to use sarees of shorter length, but the elders of the family take objection to such unorthodox practices."

Provincialism is a bar not only to the realization of national Swaraj, but also the achievement of provincial autonomy. Women perhaps are more responsible than men for keeping up this narrow spirit. Variety is worth cherishing up to a certain limit, but if the limit is exceeded, amenities and customs masquerading under the name of variety are subversive of nationalism. The Deccani *saree* is a thing of beauty, but the beauty must be let go if it can be secured only by sacrificing the nation. The Deccani, Gujarati, Kachchi and Bengali styles of wearing *saree* are all of them various national styles, and each of them is as national as the rest. Such being the case, preference should be accorded to that style which requires the smallest amount of cloth consistently with the demands of decency. The mutual exchange and imitation of such national style is eminently desirable. Patriotic people of the middle and poorer classes should take pride in adopting

that particular provincial style which cheapens as well as facilitates the wearing of khadi. And even there they should fix their eye upon the clothing style of the poorest of the poor. Swedeshi does not mean drowning oneself in one's own little puddle, but making it tributary to the ocean that is the nation. What is true of clothing is equally true of language, food, etc. (2—2—1928)

KHADI AND OTHER VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villages to be able to occuppy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. (16—11—1934)

* * *

Ques. :—Was not the village industries movement meant to oust all machinery?

Ans. :—Is not this wheel a machine? (pointing to the charkha before him.)

Ques. :—I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery.

Ans. :—Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the

opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.

Ques. :—What about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?

Ans. :—Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work? I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphixiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant to enrich the few at the expense of the many or without cause to displace the useful labour of many. Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness, but this. I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you and am

adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust. (22—6—1935)

COMPULSION

We do not want to universalize khadi by compulsion. We want to do our work only by changing the habits and ideas of the people. Therefore we should carry on our research from all aspects. (August, 1941)*

KHADI WORKERS AND POLITICS

If the workers of the A.I.S.A. be of the *above nature then they can find no time to take part in politics. The A.I.S.A. cannot fulfil its function if its workers work only for eight hours and spend the rest of their time in pleasure and other diversions. Because it is they who will make or mar the A.I.S.A. Therefore they have to use their spare time also in becoming proficient and qualifying themselves better for their work by studying the various processes of making khadi, its science, and technique.

This does not, however, mean that the workers of the A.I.S.A. have no interest in politics or in other matters. They have and should have interest, but he alone understands politics rightly who derives all his interest through the work of the Charkha Sangh, making proper use of it under restraint. He will be a truly good voter and vote for the candidate standing on behalf of the Congress, but he will not entangle himself in persuading others to vote for a

*This refers to 'Worker and money' in chapter IX p. 85

particular person, nor will he deliver lectures. Congress work is people's work. The Congress represents the people. The Congress has given birth to the A.I.S.A. The A.I.S.A. also belongs to the people. Just as politicial work is an activity of the Congress so also is the A.I.S.A. an activity of the Congress. But how can one ride two horses? One who joins the A.I.S.A., should devote himself wholly to the work of the A.I.S.A. One who enters politics should devote himself to it. So the two should divide the work and help each other. Therefore the rule of the A. I. S. A. has been that its workers should not take an active part in politics. (3—11—1945)*

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND GOVERNMENT AID

Ques. :—Do you hope that the constructive programme will be able to achieve its object during your lifetime by mere propaganda? Don't you think that having regard to the natural frailties of man there will be need of legislative aid to make the people take to the constructive programme on a universal scale? Will there be any violation of the principle of non-violence to take such help from the elected representatives of the people especially as we are now in the machine age? If so, how?

Ans. :—I have said many a time that we should take aid from the Government only on our own terms. Even beyond this we have to take help from the whole world. There was a time when I felt that we could have little co-operation

from the legislators in the matter of the constructive programme. But now I have come to realize that if the representatives of the people go into the legislature we can secure their help. Along with this we must keep in mind that as long as we cannot carry on our constructive programme ourselves, even in adverse circumstances, we cannot properly appreciate its value. Other people, of course, can't. I can say from experience and from a dispassionate view of the matter that the strength of the people has increased in proportion to the progress of the constructive programme. If we can popularize the constructive programme on a universal scale and bring it into effect through the general public, then Swaraj is in our hands.

(29—11—1945)*

CERTIFIED AND UNCERTIFIED KHADI

The following question is the sign of the changing times :—

"There is not much difference after gaining our independence between pure khadi, uncertified khadi, mill cloth and foreign cloth. There is surely difference if we spin and weave for our need, because this is based on a special line of thought. However, sufficient yarn cannot be spun for the cloth needed. We buy khadi from the Khadi Bhandars. Even the yarn quota that is given is not home-spun. There does not seem to be any progress in pure khadi. There are many varieties in uncertified khadi. The reason for this seems to be that the workers engaged in genuine khadi work

have no interest in its improvement. Now-a-days normal wages have gone so high that there is no question of a living wage. Then what objection can there be to the buying of uncertified khadi? There is so much shortage of cloth in the country. Even the national Government is importing foreign cloth. It is in its hands to import or not to import foreign cloth. Still it continues to import. How is it an evil to buy such cloth?"

Certified khadi alone can be real khadi. Here the word "certified" does not express the full meaning. The real meaning of "certified" is that khadi for which yarn has been bought on payment of a full wage, which has been woven on payment of a full weaving wage, and whose selling price has been fixed not for profit-making but in the interest of the people. There is only one institution which can issue such a certificate and it is the A.I.S.A. Therefore that alone is real khadi for which the A.I.S.A. has given the certificate.

All other khadi is uncertified and is spurious. There must be some fault somewhere in not obtaining the A.I.S.A. certificate. Why should we buy condemned khadi? There is no room for doubt that there is a difference between genuine and condemned khadi. It can be argued that there is some defect in the conditions of the certificate themselves. If there be any it is the duty of the people to point it out. Without showing the defect on account of lethargy it is not proper to ignore the difference between certified and uncertified khadi under any circumstance. It

may be that we have taken so much to the wrong path that we cannot go in the right path at all. Or that which we consider to be the right path may be only a delusion. It is not proper for the representatives of the people to stoop so low.

How can there be any doubt that there is a difference between khadi, swadeshi millcloth and foreign cloth? How can it be proper to import foreign cloth when the foreign Government has disappeared? Such a question itself shows that we hove forgotten the very reason of our opposition to the foreign Government. There was an enormous financial loss to the country because of the existence of the foreign Government. It should be the primary business of Swaraj to stop that.

Therefore under Swaraj there is room only for genuine khadi. Therein lies the welfare of the people. By khadi alone equality can be achieved.

(5—1—1948)*

Kabeer Printing Works, Madras (1619)

accomplish